

Örebro University

Department of Humanities

May 23, 2006

PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES ABROAD:  
POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND  
THE PUBLIC SPHERE

MA thesis

Global Journalism

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## **Abstract**

The concept of the public sphere has been frequently examined by different authors and in a variety of diverse contexts. The notions of democracy, public participation and functional public opinion are all materialized within such a unique conception. This research questions the possibility of creating a public sphere among the Palestinian communities abroad, and seeks to figure out the characteristics of the main political communication channels between the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian diaspora. Since this topic has been rarely tackled in the past whether by academic or professional researchers, this thesis aims to bring up the main part of the problem by focusing on how these communities are represented and connected - by both state political and media departments - within the Palestinian central society, and how does such representation or connectivity affect the rise and development of any potential public sphere or democratic public participation in general.

I used qualitative research methods in investigating this subject, and the materials collected for the empirical study consists of a private email list that was created by a group of highly educated Palestinians both in London and Gaza, where they discussed the post election results of the recent parliamentary elections in Palestine. Moreover; I conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews in London, Stockholm and Gaza by using a non-random sampling technique. All of the interviewees are highly educated Palestinians who represent a range of sectors including individual citizens abroad and the main responsible official institutes in the political communication process. The interviews stand for a case study with particular generalizations in regard with the topic of my research. The collected materials were all analyzed by using the meaning-categorization, and the argument followed is both inductive and deductive.

The research findings showed that the email list contained various characteristics and factors that are highly correspondent with the attributes of the public sphere, but also that the participants' theoretical discussion through the email list was neither able to be translated or transformed into practical solutions, nor was it successful in keeping up its existence and continuation. Furthermore, the findings revealed several gabs existing between the Palestinian communities abroad at one hand and the Palestinian leadership and official responsible institutes on the other hand. The complexity of the political communication process between both parties was clarified through presenting multi-sided views, which highlighted the major obstacles and initiatives in relation to the political communication course. On the other hand, the research concludes that

though it is probable to generate a public sphere among the Palestinian communities abroad, the functional status of such a sphere is not possible to achieve currently. The research returned the previous conclusion to the inefficient current political communication approach adopted by the Palestinian leadership towards the Palestinian communities abroad, which obviously failed in closing up the gabs between both sides. Furthermore, the thesis concludes that the current reform process of the political communication line is a possibility that is proved by the several initiatives taken in that direction, yet, it states that such reform is restricted to a set of crucial conditions.

# **1. Introduction**

Since Palestinians have been always looking for establishing a democratic state for themselves, all responsible sectors are expected to participate cooperatively in such a massive task. However, the reality is different; participation rules are not clear, distribution of responsibilities is rather random, communication channels are not well prepared, and less than half of the capacities have been recruited to fulfill their national duties. One of the biggest and most important sectors that lie off such process is definitely the Palestinian diaspora. It comprises more than half of the population, who have been constantly considered a large source of investment, but never used as it should be.

Nowadays, the necessity for improvements and developments inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) has extremely increased, and the way we handle the emerging political, economic and social problems there, in my opinion, is both insufficient and incompetent. Therefore, an immediate professional support is highly required, or otherwise, complications will snowball probably towards a deadlock. It is supposed that the time has come for Palestinians to help each other establishing a worthy and valuable state, and the way I look at it, is how to use our large investment in the diaspora at this stage?, and from which point to start?

As I realize that the communication level between any government and its citizens is a central factor in determining the state development progress, I think it is important to examine the basic course of communication between the Palestinian diaspora at one hand, and the Palestinian leadership on the other hand as a first step. In my thesis, I have handled that issue extensively, but I also tended to exemplify the potential level and quality of participation that should be incorporated in our Palestinian society.

## ***1.1 Background***

Since the Israeli occupation to Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have experienced several waves of exile. They were forced to leave their original cities and move to a variety of other Arab and foreign countries as refugees. In 1967, the six-day war was fought between Israel on one side, and Egypt, Jordan and Syria on the other side. Israel won the war and took over Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, Arab East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. As a result, other hundreds thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their original cities. These refugees together constituted the Palestinian diaspora.

According to UNRWA (2005), the *number of registered Palestinian refugees* has subsequently grown from 914,000 in 1950 to more than four million in 2002, and it continues to rise due to the natural population growth. In 2004, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) recorded the total number of Palestinians throughout the world as 9.6 millions, 4.9 millions of the total number live in the diaspora today; while 1.1 million lives in Israel and 3.6 million live in the occupied Palestinian territories (Gaza & West Bank).

The *distribution of the Palestinian diaspora* throughout the world today is as the following: 2.8 millions in Jordan, 443 thousands in Syria, 421 thousands in Lebanon, 63 thousands in Egypt, 604 thousands in the rest of the Arab countries, 239 thousands in the United States, and 304 thousands in the rest of the foreign countries.

### **1.1.1 Palestinian Communities in Europe**

According to Sari Hanafi (2001), Palestinian communities' networks in their diaspora demonstrate several forms of networking with varying degrees of institutionalization; familial networks, nationalistic-religious networks, and supra-national networks based on Arab and religious affiliations. He argues that Palestinian communities are recent in Europe except in the U.K., and that many individuals in the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy came as students and later decided to settle. On the other hand, there are thousands of Palestinians who migrated to Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Germany mainly from Lebanon after the Israeli occupation of that country in 1982, this category is generally characterized by law academic and professional qualifications, and many of them are dependent on the social welfare system in such countries. Hanafi explained further that the second gulf war brought lots of trained and skilled Palestinians to Europe and particularly to the U.K, accordingly; they formed a significant concentration of business people there with a pattern of individual entrepreneurship.

### **1.1.2 The Concept of Diaspora**

It is very important to clarify the implications of the 'diaspora' concept so that to facilitate understanding the characteristics of the Palestinian communities abroad. In fact, a consensus over a single definition of this term is hardly evident nowadays. Therefore, I have made a summary of the most significant points regarding this concept expressed by [Safran 1991, Cohen 1997, Brah

1996, Danforth 1996 and argued by Roza Tsagarousianou (2004) in his article; *Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in a Globalized World*].

In general, the word 'diaspora' refers to those original communities that were spread from their homeland to two or more countries and share the following characteristics:

- *They have a common vision, a memory or myth about their homeland.*
- *They have a belief that they will never be accepted by their host societies and therefore develop their autonomous cultural and social needs.*
- *The belief that they or their decedents will return to homeland is a favorable one.*
- *They usually continue to maintain support for homeland through solidarity activities.*
- *The notion of home is much more complex than referring to 'nostalgia'; it is linked with the ways in which the processes of inclusion or exclusion operate.*
- *They share a common identity with members of the same ethnic communities in other countries; tensions between ethnic, national and transnational identities can lead to creative formulations.*
- *Diasporic identities are the product of active engagement in 'politics'; not all dispersed populations can automatically be identified as diasporas because they share ethnic ancestry and identity. It is their self-mobilization around their awareness of themselves as diaspora, and their willingness to engage themselves with the building of transnational imagination and connections that constitutes their diasporic identification.*
- *Diasporas do not look back in a nostalgic effort of recovering or maintaining their identity, but effectively discover or contrast notions about themselves and home by essentially looking forward.*
- *The construction of the diasporic identity is a socio-political process, involving dialogue, negotiations, and debate as to 'who we are' and moreover, what it means to be 'who we are'.*

- *Finally, mobility and displacement are not enough terms to identify diasporas, however; it is a set of relationships, networks and discourses that constitutes diasporic phenomena.*

### **1.1.3 Right of Return**

It is the right of the Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to the homes their families had possessed prior to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war or the Six-Day War in 1967. The UN General Assembly Resolution 194 was passed on December 11, 1948. It states that ‘refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property’.

### **1.1.4 PLO**

It is a political and paramilitary organization of Palestinians dedicated to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The organization was established in 1964 and its primary goals were to achieve a political representation of the Palestinian people, and to return the Palestinian lands through means of armed struggle. They carried out several attacks on Israeli military targets, as well as symbolic co-managed hijacking of western planes during the 1970s. It has been argued that PLO attacks were merely a mean of publicizing the Palestinian rights of freedom and return. In 1974, it received UN recognition, and it is known until today as the sole legitimate body for representing Palestinian people throughout the world. PLO has been responsible for supervising the Palestinian embassies and delegations abroad for a long period of time. Shikaki (1996) argued that the structure of the PLO has been weakened after its recognition of the two-state solution in November 1988 as well as by the second gulf war. According to him, the gulf war not only ended the PLO’s funding sources, but also weakened its status and legitimacy at the regional and international levels.

### **1.1.5 Oslo Accords**

In 1993, the chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat signed a peace agreement with Israel brokered by Norway after months of secret negotiations between PLO and Israel. Both sides recognized each other as Israel agreed to allow for Palestinian self-rule, first in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, and later in other areas of the West Bank. On the other hand, PLO agreed to stop attacking Israeli military targets. The agreement also resulted in the return of some PLO

members to Palestine after long years of exile. As a result of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, the whole peace process was interrupted and violence erupted again inside the occupied Palestinian territories.

### **1.1.6 Palestinian Authority (PA)**

The Palestinian National Authority was established in 1994, pursuant to the Oslo accords between the PLO and the government of Israel, as a 5-year transitional body during which final status negotiations between the two parties were to take place. The PA was led earlier by late president Yasser Arafat and currently by president Mahmoud Abbas. The leadership of the Palestinian Authority is committed to the establishment of the Palestinian state. It happened that some Palestinian political factions as well as individuals, both inside and outside the PLO, saw the emerging body of the PA as illegitimate.

### **1.1.7 National Reconstruction & Transition to Democracy in Palestine**

After the signing of September 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (DOP), The West Bank and Gaza have witnessed intense developmental procedures and an intense national building process. PA has managed to build up and develop several Palestinian official, academic and professional institutions. Nevertheless, the PA was extremely criticized and accused by Palestinians and others for its involvement in corruption matters. In regard with democracy inside the OPT, several survey researches showed that Palestinians support freedom of the press, the rights of the opposition, and the right of women to political participation (Shikaki 1996, p.12). Although there are many academic intellectuals, who still think that democratic conditions in the Palestinian territories are much far better than in the neighboring Arab countries, some academic researches showed that democracy have lots of challenges in Palestine. As the Palestinians in the 1980s succeeded in creating social; political, and professional civil institutions and NGOs that fulfilled many functions, it has been argued by Shikaki (1996) that such institutions were either weakened due to financial resources or absorbed by the establishment of the PA institutions and ministries in 1994 and 1995. Mudar Kassis (2001) emphasized this issue by indicating that the relation between the Palestinian civil society and the PA is a competitive one, because the 'more important role that institutions of civil society can play within the transition to democracy lies in its capacity to limit the state's hegemony' (Kassis 2001, p.39). The conclusion of Kassis's study was that NGOs though play a positive and focal role in Palestine; they have a limited role in the

process of democratization. In relation with the Palestinian media, it has been pointed out that the PA interfered in the Palestinian media in order to sustain the continuation of the peace process:

*'The PA also took repressive measures against the press, including temporary closing opposition papers and banning the distribution of the mainstream Al Quds for publishing anti-Oslo views. Al Nahar was temporarily banned, in July 1994, for its pro-Jordanian tendencies, and was allowed to re-open only after insuring a change in editorial direction'.*

*(Shikaki 1996, p.9)*

Shikaki suggested that solving the conflict between democratic and national agendas depends on how the PA orders the hierarchy of their priorities; in other words, he questioned the balance between security, political independence and economic issues on one side, and political participation, accountability, and freedom of expression on the other side.

### **1.1.8 The Current Situation**

In August 2004, Israel applied a unilateral withdrawal plan and removed its settlements from Gaza; the settlements removal resulted in returning almost one third of Gaza lands that were occupied for more than 30 years ago. In another recent development, the political situation in Palestine had totally changed after Hamas party won the democratic parliamentary elections that took place in January 2005, and consequently formed a new Palestinian government. Hamas is mainly a resistance militant movement, which was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yaseen in 1987 during the first Intifada in Gaza. Israel assassinated Sheikh Yaseen in March 2004. The primary goal for Hamas is to return the Palestinian occupied lands, and it is committed towards establishing the Palestinian state as well.

Regarding the peace process, Hamas does not recognize the Oslo accords and they acted as opposition to Fateh party that was ruling the PA from 1994 until 2005, in addition; the movement has always employed means of armed struggle to achieve its national goals. After Hamas won the Palestinian government, the United States and the European Union halted direct aids to the Palestinian government which equaled one billion dollars in 2005. Hamas was asked to recognize Israel, renounce the 'armed struggle', and respect the existing agreements between the PA and Israel so that financial aids continue to the new Palestinian government.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Hanafi (2001) referred to an argument made by ‘Meyer et al.’ regarding development; the argument showed that there are two possibilities for developing countries through their expatriate professional communities; either through a ‘return option’ or through remote connection and mobilization to scientific and cultural programs at home ‘diaspora option’. In this research, I am obviously dealing with the latter option. Though it is considered a Palestinian legal right, a solution for a physical return of the Palestinian diaspora to their homeland is still limited and complicated. The issue has been discussed and claimed extensively in the past by the Palestinian part, nevertheless; the continuous cycle of violence, the enormous existing complications in the OPT, and the difficulty of suggesting any practical solution agreed by both parties hindered any further development in this focal topic.

Directly after establishing the PA, it has been ideologically and practically understood as a center of gravity for the Palestinian population as a whole. Accordingly, the crisis of social, political, and economic connectivity of the Palestinian diaspora with their homeland emerged, and a plenty of variable and distinctive views were adopted by the Palestinian diaspora as well as the Palestinian leadership regarding the role, nature and level of required connectivity.

In a recent conference concerning the Palestinian diaspora held in Amman in 2004, it has been revealed that Palestinian expatriates have been contributing to the socio-economic development in the OPT since 1994, nevertheless; such contributions were described to be limited, unorganized, scattered and in most cases based on individual initiatives. Among the few Palestinian institutionalized efforts contributing to the development of the OPT is the TOKTEN program (The Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals) which is implemented through the UNDP. It is considered a very successful project with more than 178 Palestinian experts who have contributed to the development movement in the OPT. Also PALESTA (Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad) which is an internet-based network connecting a group of professional Palestinian individuals to contribute in the scientific development in their homeland.

### **1.2.1 Research Purpose**

The goal of my research, thus, is to raise the question of connectivity between the Palestinian educated communities abroad and the Palestinian leadership from a different perspective. The

approach followed here is a unique one; it is not confined to a particular contribution or development in this matter, nonetheless; it addresses the issue from a variety of divergent angles, and it analyzes the political communication process between both sides at a very basic level. I used the concept of the ‘public sphere’ introduced by Habermas (1989) to limit my focus when addressing this subject. I intended to highlight those Palestinian efforts that can be useful to the democratic participatory development in the OPT, and I was most concerned with the Palestinian ‘rational’ attempts and discussions, whether successful or not, that are directed to accomplish a positive and successful change in the OPT.

### **1.2.2 Research Questions**

There are two main research questions in this study; both of them are largely connected to each other:

- 1.** Is it possible to develop a Palestinian public sphere among the Palestinian communities abroad?
- 2.** How does the current political communication approach of the Palestinian leadership affect the rise and development of such a sphere?

The central playing actors in this research area lie in two different categories; the first category includes Palestinian educated citizens who either live or study outside Palestine, while the second one includes the main Palestinian official institutes (both political and media) responsible for the Political communication process with the Palestinian communities abroad (PCs). The themes of democracy and citizenship are highly embedded in my analysis, and they are considered the main ground upon which the research develops.

### **1.2.3 Research Significance**

In fact, this research deals with a variety of substantial issues that render it a useful source of unique information both on the theoretical and practical levels. The importance of this study can be summarized by the following points:

- 1-** It highlights the issue of the Palestinian communities as an essential research topic, and it addresses the problem of unity and connectivity between them and their homeland.

- 2- It provides up-to-date information about the current political communication condition between the Palestinian leadership and Palestinians communities abroad. It pictures the situation from different sides by contacting the relevant concerned parties.
- 3- It covers both the personal and official views of those working at the Palestinian official institutes, and it scrutinizes the Palestinian current official practices towards a large part of the Palestinian population.
- 4- It brings an understanding regarding how official media in OPT (belongs to the PA or the PLO) functions in relation to the Palestinian communities.
- 5- It examines the concept of the public sphere within a Palestinian context.
- 6- It sheds the light on the concept of the Palestinian democracy, and connects opinions expressed by high Palestinian officials and citizens together.
- 7- It tackles a Palestinian developmental issue where all interviewed persons are highly educated Palestinian citizens, officials and students.
- 8- It offers both theoretical and practical findings.
- 9- Solutions and recommendations can possibly be drawn from the analysis of a complex network of relationships and contested views.
- 10- The conclusion of this study is planned to be valid for generalizations as long as we deal with the Palestinian context.

### **1.2.4 Thesis Terminology**

I would like to voice your concern about the meaning of the following terms that have been used a lot in this thesis:

#### **I. Palestinian Community (PC)**

It refers to those Palestinians in the diaspora (refugees from 1948 and 1967) in addition to other Palestinians who reside, study, or seek asylum outside Palestine. The number of Palestinians who study or seek asylum in foreign countries is pretty high; many of them (whether they used to live

in the OPT or in any other Arab or foreign country) usually decide to settle outside the OPT because of the difficult economic, political and social conditions there. Those Palestinians share lots of qualities with the Palestinian earlier diaspora as they experience a diasporic mode of life even if many of them were not expelled out by force.

## **II. Palestinian Association (Palestinska Foreningen) (PAS)**

It refers to the Palestinian representative organization (sometimes belongs to the PLO) that is formed and run by Palestinians in some countries, where there is a noticeable number of Palestinian citizens. It is an unofficial body that is responsible for representing Palestinians in their host countries, and arranging activities in relation to Palestine.

## **III. Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)**

In this research, the concept refers to both the West Bank and Gaza where the Palestinian Authority (PA) has its government offices now.

## **IV. Official Media / State Media (SM)**

It refers to the official media institutes located in the OPT, and belongs to either the PLO or PA. It has been also referred to as 'national media'.

## **V. Relevant Remarks**

1. I usually use the word 'embassy' or 'community' to refer to the Palestinian embassy or the Palestinian community. I also use a small [s] for the plural form of different abbreviations such as (PC) and (PCs).
2. Quotations are all written in *italics*, and they represent an indispensable part of the analysis chapter. In order to clarify the exact meaning in some quotations, I typed my explanation within two brackets as such (...).
3. I use the word participant to refer to the people who took part in the email list, while I use the word informant to refer to a certain interviewed person.

## **1.3 Thesis Structure**

This thesis comprises five main chapters divided into a theoretical part as well as an empirical one. Apart from this chapter that presents the introduction, background, research problem, motivation, research questions, terminology, and importance of the study, the thesis is divided into the following four chapters:

### **I. Chapter Two**

This chapter provides a theoretical background as well as a review for some relevant studies to my research topic. The concept of the public sphere is introduced as the major theoretical framework in which other theories regarding political communication, deliberative democracy, public opinion, political participation, and civic journalism are discussed collectively in order to provide a comprehensive overview concerning this concept.

### **II. Chapter Three**

This chapter describes the scientific methods I used in this research for conducting my empirical study and drawing my final conclusions. It presents detailed information concerning the reasons for using the qualitative methods, the applied case study, the process of data collection and analysis of material, possible limitations and shortcomings in the research, and the ethical considerations in reference to my study.

### **III. Chapter Four**

This chapter is dedicated to the findings and analysis of my empirical study. It presents an elaborate analysis for my research empirical data (email list & qualitative interviews) according to the chosen scientific methods, and it also displays the findings concluded by such analysis throughout the chapter. The public sphere and political communication theories should be in mind when going through that chapter. The larger part of the analysis tackles the political and media communication approach of the Palestinian leadership in relation to the PCs abroad.

### **IV. Chapter Five**

This chapter presents the final conclusions of my research, and the answers for the two proposed research questions in connection with my theoretical background. It also includes a discussion regarding my findings and suggestions for further research in relevant sides of my topic.

## **V. References**

It includes a list of the materials used in producing this research; books, articles, websites, documents, lectures notes...etc.

## 2. Theoretical Background & Literature Review

The following part of my thesis provides a theoretical background as well as a review for some major studies related to my research topic. The concept of the public sphere introduced by *Jurgen Habermas* represents the general framework of the following section in which other theories regarding political communication, deliberative democracy, public opinion, political participation, and civic journalism integrate together to form a comprehensive view about the reality of this concept. There are also other theories such as development journalism, modernization theory, culture industry, political representation, citizenship that were introduced on a minor level to support the flow of argument through the text. Although I used Habermas's model of the public sphere as a basic ground for my discussion, I highlighted several other arguments about the subject during my analysis for the different constituents of the public sphere, and I emphasized my attention on the political communication process within the public sphere as well as the major factors that decide the formulation and development of such conception.

### 2.1 *The Concept of the Public Sphere*

#### Rise, Disappearance, and Criticism

German sociologist Jurgen Habermas developed the concept of the public sphere in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989). The book was first released in Germany in 1962, and almost thirty years later, Thomas Burger translated Habermas's work into English, which immediately received much attention especially by British and Americans intellectuals. The work has soon become a significant topic for discussions and researches in the fields of cultural theories, philosophy, sociology, history and media and communication studies.

Habermas defined the public sphere as:

*'An arena, independent of government (even if in receipt of state funds) and also enjoying autonomy from partisan economic forces, which is dedicated to rational debate (i.e. to debate and discussion which is not 'interests', 'disguised' or 'manipulated') and which is both accessible to entry and open to inspection by the citizenry. It is here, in this public sphere, that the public opinion is formed'*

*(quoted in Thussu 2000)*

According to Habermas, a main prerequisite for a public sphere to be formed is to have a public arena in which private citizens gather and discuss topics without any constraints or domination by the government; these discussions are supposed to determine matters of public concern or

common interests. In his work, Habermas focused on the bourgeois political life of the seventeenth through twentieth centuries in England, France and Germany in order to identify what conditions led to the growth of the public sphere, the decline of the public discourse, and what can be done to renew this public arena in our societies today (See Calhoun 1993, Weisser 2002). From a historical point of view, the participants of the public sphere were actually European educated male citizens who used to gather in literary clubs, salons and associations, and who disregarded their social status as being the precondition for participation, nevertheless; the quality of debate and validity of argument were much important than social positions (See McKeon 2004, Garnham 1993, Weisser 2002).

Before capitalism, the private individuals who succeeded in constituting the public sphere were actually able to influence the governmental, legislative and judicial decisions, and that was mainly due to the transformation of discussed topics (influenced by the expansion of market economy) from literature, plays, opera and music into state-related issues that Habermas defined as 'public matters'. The similarity between what we call today 'civil society' and the concept of the 'public sphere' is that both consider a separation from the state, regardless the degree of this segregation, and that the bourgeois public sphere has worked in articulating the needs of the society in relation to the state.

Habermas indicates that both merchants and aristocrats in the bourgeois model of the public sphere had equal rights to speak and be heard, and that the public sphere must be, at least in principle, accessible to all participants. In simple words, Habermas considered public discourse that he calls also 'communicative action' as a possibility for the coordination of human life (Calhoun, 1993).

According to Habermas, which I agree with to a great extent, there were particular circumstances that led to the disappearance of the bourgeois model of the public sphere. Here I picked up four of them that I ordered according to how I estimate the possibility of their negative influence over the bourgeois public sphere in Europe. I also argue, through my theoretical text, that at least three of these factors are still putting forward obstacles towards developing any real functioning public sphere in modern societies. According to Habermas's observation:

*'...the expansion of the public sphere to include more and more participants brought degeneration in the quality of discourse, which actually transformed the quality of discussion and made it impossible to escape addressing class divisions (Calhoun 1993, p.3, 21).*

I think that this expanded element of inclusivity that is more or less supported today by democratic concepts and notions, works on the other side as an obstacle towards constituting an aware, effective, and functioning public opinion in many developing and developed countries. Calhoun (1993) has commented on this notion saying that:

*'...the occupation of the political public sphere by the unpropertied masses led to the interlocking of state and society which (contrary to Marx's expectations) removed from the new public sphere its former basis without supplying a new one' (Calhoun 1993, p.22).*

The second fact Habermas used to justify the decline of the content of the public debate is also related to the unlimited entrance of the public into the public arena, this actually resulted in a major shift in the basis function of public discussions that turned to address negotiations and compromises among interests instead of keeping its assignment as a critical power to state practices. The third factor in this transformational process is related to the function of media that had its sole goal and focus to gain commercial profits; meaning that the press had witnessed a transition from addressing ideological sides to achieving success in business. By understanding the role media plays today over people's ideologies and views, one can easily comprehend the significant position media took in degrading the public discourse at that time:

*'As newspapers and other forums of public debate became more and more occupied with their own commercial success and less with political and social change, the bourgeois public sphere disappeared' (Weisser 2002, p.73).*

Finally, Habermas argued that as a result of the increasing amount of state intervention in private activities of civil life, the capacity or power of the public sphere largely decreased.

Although Habermas stressed that *'the nature of the public sphere and the conditions of its possible existence must be understood historically'* (Postone 1993, p.165), there were lots of criticism as well as new perspectives regarding this controversial concept. I think it is important to critically present some of these influential ideas as they offer an extensive review and discussion about some of the main aspects of the public sphere.

Many critics have considered the term "public" as being a controversial concept, Nancy Fraser (1993) has raised this issue while criticizing the bourgeois public sphere, and she made the notion that:

*'...the word public can, for example, mean (1) state-related, (2) accessible to everyone, (3) of concern to everyone, and (4) pertaining to a common good or shared interest...(5) pertaining to private property in a market economy and (6) pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life' (Fraser 1993, p.128).*

In fact, though I agree that the word “public” can possibly carry all those meanings, I still support Joseph Harris’s notion about this term that he considered a very interesting one just for the fact that it refers to a space or a location rather than to a particular group or community of people. In addition, Weisser (2002) also indicates that the first recorded uses of the word ‘public’ in English identify the public with the common good of the majority of individuals in a community, and that the term was initially used to mean “in the best interests of the masses” unlike the term ‘private’ that was initially used to mean ‘privileged’ at a higher governmental or bureaucratic status. Thus, I agree with Fraser that the term should have been specified more. However; by tracing back the historical origins of this word, I think it is more likely not referring to private property or personal life. I think, in order to grasp the notion of the public sphere correctly away from the historical fact of the bourgeois society, the term ‘public’ should be observed as being distinct from the state, market and personal affairs.

Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge’s *Public Sphere and Experience: Towards an Analysis of the Bourgeois and the Proletarian Public Sphere* was also published in German and translated into English in 1993. Their book has contributed a lot to the ongoing discussion around the public sphere; as they attempted to make a clear distinction between the image Habermas portrayed regarding the bourgeois public sphere, and the reality of this concept. Negt and Kluge suggested that the bourgeois public sphere had other goals than discussing topics of public concern such as increasing capitalism, generating profits, facilitating commodity productions, building up a network of relations among participants and gaining power and influence. This criticism was clarified further by Weisser as he writes that:

*'Negt and Kluge suggest that the public sphere was used as a tool by the bourgeois, a method for increasing their ability to create markets for their goods, facilitate trade, and generate profit for themselves and their peers. They used the ideal of consensus, equality, openness, and the like to create favorable situations' (Weisser 2002, p.76).*

By idealizing the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas received criticism in two other important aspects; exclusivity and negligence of other existing possible spheres. Fraser (1993) suggested that the point of accessibility did not exist in the bourgeois public sphere as Habermas claimed; she argued that protocols of style and decorum served to intensify the status of inequality, as both

women and members of plebian classes were prevented from equal participation. Furthermore, she stated that some interests were excluded from public debate being considered as domestic or private matters. Fraser wrote that *'women of all classes and ethnicities were excluded from official political participation on the basis of gender status'* (Fraser 1993, p.118).

In fact, the matter of accessibility here is problematic, the fact provided by Fraser is historically correct, but I think that it should be stressed carefully in this context. Though the entrance of women and marginalized groups into the public sphere is absolutely essential, the conditions of inclusion should be applied on all participants in the sphere. This means that even if the public sphere is considered as an open arena, the entrance into such arena should be correspondent with the aims and standards of such a sphere, or otherwise, the factors that led the disappearance of this public space will arise again. Habermas has actually noted the exclusionary and ideological character of the liberal public sphere, but he still argued that the entrance of the masses into the political arena has *'rendered it inadequate as a direct model for democracy today'* (Postone 1993, p.165).

The failure to examine other non-liberal, no bourgeois competing public spheres was another criticism against Habermas by Fraser (1993). The competing public spheres are those related to nationalists' publics, elite women's publics, working class publics and popular peasant publics. Though I agree that there are several public spheres in each society, there are *three remarks* that are important to point out in this context. *First*, according to Weisser (2002), the bourgeois private sphere *'inhabited by women and children was not a hidden space, but it was discussed in public as a necessary component of the 'whole' man's life'* (Weisser 2002, p.67), and in such way its value was confirmed in public. *Second*, the dominant nature of the public sphere was bourgeois, and *'bourgeois society produced a certain kind of public sphere'* (Calhoun 1993, p.7). *Thirdly*, I think that the quality of the various public spheres also matters considering the fact that more than half of the population in Britain lived at that time on the margins of the society, and were *'too involved with securing necessities to be concerned with public discourse'* (Weisser 2002, p.72). Other forms of criticism to Habermas were about his negligence to account for the power controlled by the bourgeois public, and the ideological and historical circumstances that put them there in the first place. While he was also criticized for neglecting public service models and all other forms of communication action not directed towards consensus (See Garnham 1993, Weisser 2002).

There are many recent and interesting studies conducted about the privacy and publicity of the public sphere. In his attempt to analyze the ideological transformation of the public sphere in Turkey, Caha (2005) suggested that the globalization process have contributed greatly to the decline of the ideological public sphere around the globe, and he affirmed that that the private sphere does not exist anymore in modern society. His idea was obviously supported by Karlstrom (2004) who posited a popularized model of the public sphere in which both spheres ‘public and private’ encroach upon each other so that one can speak of a private sphere within the public.

It is finally interesting to realize that the concept of the public sphere has created a cycle of discussions about so many different public spheres over the recent decades;

*‘We now have the black public sphere, the feminist public sphere, the professional public spheres, the ‘phantom public sphere’, the global public sphere, the ‘indigenous public sphere’, the intimate public sphere, the electronic public sphere and so fort’*

*(Hartley & McKee 2000, p.223)*

The concept of the public sphere provides actually some new conditions and rules that govern democratic processes. It also raises so many questions about today’s democratic standards and values, and it further indicates a distinction between a democracy that is governed by valid arguments, and a democracy that is controlled by masses. In order to have a better account about this particular notion, I will follow my discussion introducing the concepts of deliberative democracy and political participation within the framework of the public sphere.

## **2.2 Deliberative Democracy and Political Participation**

According to Habermas, the public sphere is an essential democratic forum in which citizens share a commitment to resolve problems of collective choice, and transform the state to an authority supervised by the public and restricted to a limited number of functions. This sort of democracy was not meant to be a representative one, but for sure a deliberative democracy in which citizens deliberate about their common issues in an institutionalized arena called the ‘public sphere’. In his essay about rethinking the theory of the public sphere, Tanni Hass (2004) comments on Habermas’s model of democracy as he states:

*Habermas’s theory of the public sphere is based upon the ideal of a “deliberative,” as opposed to merely “informed” public. As the space between civil society and the state in which citizens can debate issues of common concern, a well-functioning public sphere depends on both access*

*to pertinent information about the actions of governmental institutions and opportunities for citizens to engage in rational-critical deliberation that result in the formation of public opinion, and the shaping of governmental conduct (Haas 2004, p.179).*

I agree with Haas in his belief that Habermas's perspective of democracy is absolutely deliberative with a certain power that is able to influence the governments' actions and policies. Unlike other forms of democracy, deliberative democracy considers that legitimacy of lawmaking can only arise from the public deliberation of the citizenry, and provides time for all participants to understand and discuss the issues. It also calls for providing people with genuine opportunities of public deliberation. As this kind of democracy seeks to include isolated and marginalized groups in the decision-making process, it serves as a fundamental principle in the public sphere as long as the participation rules are clearly stated. Concerning the benefits gained by deliberative or discursive democracy in the part of citizenry, Fraser (1993) and Weisser (2002) indicated that the public sphere creates a theater in which rational debate renders the state accountable for at least the concerned participants, and that citizens become able to influence the decisions of the state by having a control over their political, social, and economic circumstances of their lives.

In fact, several theorists have argued that the concept of the public sphere is basic for strong democracy, and that rational public opinion is likely to be formed by the deliberation of citizens (Dahlberg, 2005 & Clark, 2000). Habermas's democratic model was criticized for his notion regarding the need for a sharp separation between the state and the civil society, and his negligence to social equality as a necessary condition for participatory parity in public sphere (Fraser, 1993 & Postone, 1993). In this context, I would rather argue with Calhoun (1993) that the struggle instead must focus on seeking a 'democratic public discourse', which I insist on its rationality, as the boundaries between the state and the society has become unclear in this age. The notion of deliberative democracy has been discussed extensively in the recent years, according to Clark (2000), the value of "deliberative democracy" or "public deliberation" has been tackled by (Bohman, 1996; Fishkin, 1991; Miller, 1993; Dryzek 1990). As I have mentioned before, the concept of the public sphere though it may not provide a perfect model for democracy, nevertheless; it critically questions the forms of democracy and communication today:

*'In contemporary discourse, "public sphere" now signifies the general questing for democratic agency in an era of declining electoral participation, compromised sovereignties, and frustrated or disappointed citizenship' (Hartley & McKee 2000, p.224).*

At the very center of his conceptualization of democracy, Habermas stresses the issue of political participation; the quantity or openness to popular and political participation is considered a main pillar in the process of building up deliberative democracy. A simple definition of participation can be the act of taking part or sharing in something; which, I believe, simultaneously means the expressions and construction of one's identity through various means. On the other hand, political participation can refer to the legal activities done by private citizens with the aim of influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take (Verba, Nie, & Kim 1978, p.46). Here, I would like to stress the fact that the legality of activities is essential when considering political participation, because this legality preserves the thread of communication between the state and its citizens. Not to mention that the opportunity to participate is considered a political right by itself, and this right or opportunity is actually given by the state to the citizens for the aim of developing and scrutinizing the state activities. Therefore, it is finally up to the citizens whether to use or refuse this right. In many cases, citizens may lack the resources to take advantage of these opportunities, while in other cases; the state itself may put forward obstacles that hinder or discourage citizens' participation. There has been a big argument about the quantity of political participation which many theorists confined to the availability of motivations, resources, and opportunities. This suggests that unequal distribution of these three factors will result in unequal degrees of participation, add to that the fact that the quality of participation or even the quality of discourse is further connected with the participants' individual qualifications. That is to say *'when political participation increases substantially, political discourse does not become markedly more rational and critical'* (Schudson 1993, p.160); a very good example which reminds us of the disturbance of balance that took place between rational argument and increase of participation in the bourgeois public sphere, and finally ended it.

Habermas has correctly called for depoliticizing politics in order to expand the citizens' opportunities for political participation, at the same time; considering the complicated structures of our communities today, I think that the process of transforming people into active participants requires more than a set of isolated acts, it rather needs a comprehensive strategy that covers the different micro, meso, and macro levels of a certain community.

Through utilizing the legal channels of participation, citizens become able to start a productive communication with the state; where they can comment on the performance of the government, influence decisions made by the state, make a change in the political system...etc. At a very basic level, political participation is not only a requirement for democracy, but also for true citizenship. Habermas has defined the 'citizens' as the one *'who not only has free access to public discourse but also participates in and helps shape it'* (Weisser 2002, p.36). This means ideologically that deliberation matters when it comes to define citizens, and simultaneously when we define societies and communities. In my opinion, restricting the term "citizenship" only to the rights of nomination and election is a misleading notion that is usually over emphasized in authoritative developing states, and unfortunately; is the thing that matters most when international bodies wish to support democracy in certain developing countries such as the case in Iraq or Palestine today.

In order to avoid shallow interpretations of democracy, one must think of the issues that help citizens recognize their citizenships. For instance, Roberto Alejandro (1993) suggests that when masses deliberate, they become citizens, and when they participate they create a community. Meanwhile, he asserts that citizens are citizens to the extent they participate in several dialogues; dialogue among themselves; dialogue with the past; dialogue with institutions and traditions, and dialogue with themselves. He also introduces the idea that citizens are obliged to repay the investment the state had in each of them before leaving (Alejandro, 1993). On the other hand, Alejandro referred that Benjamin Barber, who defends citizenship as a central component of strong democracy, suggests that *'both participation and community are aspects of one single mode of social being: citizenship'* (Alejandro, 1993). In this context, it is worthy to introduce the term 'participative governance' which basically carries the same principles of citizenship and political participation, this concept is interesting not only for its significance in responding to the problem of legitimacy of government institutions, but also for its capacity to offer potential solutions to a range of social problems (See Newsman, 2005).

It is universally recognized that it is citizens who should define the aspirations and values of their society. In regard with Habermas's public sphere, forms of private citizens' participation were clearly stressed and seen as a part of the rationalization process. The bourgeois public sphere recognized the principle of open participation; as common discussions included both state agents and private citizens, but different classes and traditions of the society at that time failed to apply

this democratic approach. A public sphere that confirms the role of political participation is not only a mean of supervision for the state's practices, but also a source of benefit to its participants. By joining democratic and rational discussions in the public arena, citizens contribute in educating each other about the matters of their society, and gradually; the rationality of public discourse becomes higher, while the focus on minor individual matters disappears. On the other side, participants' commitment towards reconciling and solving conflicts in their society only increases by their genuine participation in the public forums.

In their research about participation, (Mut, 2001) stressed the notion that there are two different forms of political participation; an institutionalized one representing traditional participation practices such as elections, and forum participation that have a bigger demographic base. They noticed that despite the fact that there is no distinction of status in both forms, participants in civic forums have different characteristic than those in the institutionalized one. In a relevant study about civic forums, (Blumler, 2001) studied the opportunities of public participation in cyber space, and he realized that such opportunities must be advanced by creating an authority with responsibilities for arranging, publicizing, and coordinating citizens' deliberations upon state-related problems. He justified this suggestion by implying that this proposal will not only help in increasing public participation, but will also oblige politicians and officials to take part and play a serious role in public forums.

Although it seems quite unrealistic to have a public sphere in which political participation and deliberative democracy are realized at their best functions, I think that these two basic principles should be highly considered and embedded in the designation of the state main institutions.

### **2.3 Quality of Discourse & Public Opinion**

Habermas extensively argued how the bourgeois public sphere in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was based on rational critical debate, and how the merits of argument were playing a crucial role in articulating this public space. Perhaps, both issues of argument and participation occupied the most attention and focus of critics who responded to *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas argued that the public sphere was formed by a group from the reading public:

*'Nearly all of them were literate, and as such they were able to more fully and easily communicate with one another and debate in an efficient matter. As a group, many of the*

*bourgeois had similar educational backgrounds - a characteristic that helped them form a common ground upon which to communicate. Also, this group began to develop an awareness of the public sphere as "something probably theirs" (Weisser 2002, p.67).*

The fact that almost all of the participants in the public sphere had an educational background demonstrates two substantial realities; first that education served as a common feature among participants, which facilitated the flow of discussion and made it intellectual. Second, the high level of argument succeeded in undermining the topic of class divisions among participants: In this public sphere, *'practical reason was institutionalized through norms of reasoned discourse in which arguments, not statuses or traditions were to be decisive'* (Calhoun 1993, p.2). In other words, one may assume that 'literacy' or 'reading culture' supplies the public sphere with the power to approach and influence the political system in any authority. For instance, it has been argued that new Jewish politics and press shared the aim of educating Jews, subjecting them to moral improvement in order let them worthy of emancipation, and able to inter the Jewish middle class public sphere (Penslar, 2000).

In my opinion, Habermas's emphasis over the issue of the 'quality of discourse' countered much of the criticism he received over the point of quantity, or openness to, popular participation. It seems that Habermas intended to address the problems of democracy forms today; why the more entrance of masses into politics today, and the ongoing calls for increasing public participation in the political life are unable to result in a wide and functioning public sphere? Such a question definitely highlights the quality of argument as a main condition, for establishing a contemporary public sphere, rather than a phenomenon that occurred some decades ago. As I have argued before, it happens very often that some intellectuals do not keep in mind a certain kind of balance between quality of argument and popular participation when writing about the public sphere; going deeply in discussing wishes for democratic practices usually ends up ignoring the quality or level of discourse as a fundamental feature in the public sphere. Edward Said has talked about intellectualism in the Palestinian context, he demonstrated that the role of the intellectual is to say the truth to power, and to address the central authority in every society without hypocrisy, besides, he explained further that the intellectual introduces a kind of performance that continues for years, and give utterances not to mere fashion but to real ideas and values (Khalidi, 2001). In a recent study about Bureau of Municipal Research (BMR), an urban reform organization in the U.S., Joseph Varga (2002) examined recent efforts in the U.S. to create a rationalized public sphere through the use of statistical information, BMR utilized their media in order to create a

textual space where ideas of reform, professionalism and middle class expertise would create an idealized public sphere based on scientific rationality.

It is highly considerable that intellectual discourses play a crucial role in shaping an aware public opinion based on reason and argument rather than private gains and manipulations. The public opinion that is formed out of rational discourse is the goal that the public sphere is created for. It is supposed that this final opinion should pass several processes within the public sphere before it is approved as a consensus decision:

*‘The term “opinion” although it continued to mean belief that falls short of knowledge, also came to signify, especially “public opinion” a virtual and collectivized sort of knowledge in perpetual process of formation’ (McKeon 2004, p.276).*

Habermas has raised the issue that contemporary means such as surveys and polls in identifying the public opinion is rather shallow and insufficient (Crossley & Roberts, 2004). He justified that by two main reasons which sound very true; first conductors of public opinion have pre-determined categories of opinions before the process of measurement, and second, they call for an expression of views and seek the loudest voices unlike the public sphere that looks for the ‘best argument’ within rational debates. This is actually a very interesting argument that highlights the uniqueness and great significance of discourse in forming opinions of public concern.

It has been argued by Habermas and others that the success of the public sphere can be measured when its participants arrive at some agreements or consensus, which is known to be the ‘public opinion’, and by this consensus, participant civilians become opinion-formers. Though I fully understand that agreement or consensus is a fruitful and wishful result from any formed public sphere, I do not agree that it is extremely important that this consensus gets realized. My argument is that the role of the public sphere is a multidisciplinary one, and that the failure of the public sphere to reach a certain agreement does not necessitate the failure of other processes within the public sphere. Though reaching a consensus public opinion is a perfect reflection for any public sphere, I believe the most important is both participation and argument. Sometimes, a debate with various contested views has the power to affect and influence the government acts. Besides, the public sphere has other aims such as discussing issues of public concern, educating participants by exchanging rational views, promoting the concept of participation and deliberative democracy, and closing up social gaps by focusing on the ‘common good’.

As far as the public sphere is concerned, it has been argued that the responsibility of forming the public opinion does not belong to any institutional complex, but to a vast communicative network (Baynes, 1994). But the point of conflict is that how to define the relationship between the state and those participating bodies, Nancy Fraser (1993) suggested that the public opinion will be rather strengthened if a complete segregation between the state and civil society is not realized, on the other hand; Habermas's view was to have a sharp and complete separation in the boundaries linking civil society with the state, as this will facilitate the work of civil society. The argument Fraser gave which looks realistic is that the body representing the public opinion gets empowered when it becomes able to achieve authoritative decisions out of civil opinions. A recent interesting study (Savigny, 2002) about public opinion and the internet suggested that the modern public sphere is characterized by distortion of interests; the study returned that to the increasing motivations and control of media and politics over traditional communication channels. The author presented internet as a challenging force for both media and politics, and described it as a channel through which an expressed and debated public opinion can be expressed without elite control.

What can be noticed by reading the previous paragraphs is that, in the model of the public sphere, common or public discourse is highly connected with civil action while the latter totally depends on the former; that is to say that the argument is considered the main drive for public actions, and accordingly, if the quality of discourse is ignorant or low, civilian actions will be the same and visa versa.

## ***2.4 Political Communication: Representation and Integration***

The formation of the public sphere is extremely difficult to conceptualize as long as the state runs an authoritative regime. The fact that the state should be constituted as an impersonal locus of authority is crucial to the conceptualization of the public sphere (Calhoun, 1993). Therefore, political communication between the state and its citizens is considered a very fundamental principle in developing the public sphere. Habermas himself was concerned with the obstacles of political communication that led the constriction and limitation of public political discourse (Clark, 2000); for instance, some of these obstacles were represented by the state's attempt to politicize everyday life through different means so that social and civil movements respond politically to this direction (Crossley & Roberts, 2004). Tracing back the studies that dealt with

political communication, Lang (2003) explained the history of political communication research by referring to (Cohen, 1998). Lang writes:

*'Historically, one can distinguish three stages of local political communication research...first, the research of the 1950s and 1960s, which focused optimistically on local political communication processes as a harbinger of democracy and small town community (i.e. Janowitz, 1952; Vidich & Bensman, 1958) Second, the research in 1970 and 1980s, which conceptualized local political communication as a part of mass media communication studies (See Cox & Morgan, 1973; Murphy 1976)...The third research phase, in the late 1980s, reconnected local political communication via electronic media to broader questions of local democracy and participation' (Lang 2003, p.172).*

There is also a number of recent articles that dealt with the future of the political communication field; (Graber, 2005) commented on the distraction of efforts regarding political communication research, and called for creating a collective road map for more systematic outcomes in this field, while (Mut, 2001) suggested that this science should not focus anymore on media content and messages but on citizens as active gatherers and processors of information in a globalize world.

Both variant characteristics of communication and central actors are extremely worthy elements in constituting a progressive political communication between the state and its citizens; for instance; communication is supposed to be an ongoing process that affects participants through dynamic and not fixed processes. Another important attribution is its systematic nature; meaning that it usually occurs in context. Other features of communication indicate that it has a self-reflection nature and consequence, which signifies that when you receive a message, something happens to you (See Samovar & Porter, 2004). On the other hand, there are many essential actors in the process of political communication as far as the public sphere is considered; those actors may include individual citizens, government, non-governmental organizations, media, interest groups, and business (Lang, 2003). In my empirical study, the central actors I considered were officials from the Palestinian government and its state media as well as Palestinian individuals who reside or study in the diaspora.

In the context of political communication, representation refers to how civilians get empowered in the government. Citizens usually get represented in the government by giving them the right of voting, and by representing them in the parliament through candidates, they even can, in representative democracy, provide for recalling their representatives whom they are not satisfied with. By representation we do not refer to descriptive or passive representation in which candidates are elected to represent ethnic, gender or minority groups, however; we attempt to

exceed this symbolic feature by extending the rights of citizens to participate in governance as I have already explained in the form of deliberative democracy. The issue of employing representation to create a balance between the state political agenda and the central actors in a society has been addressed well by Garnham (1993) who commented:

*'The overwhelming focus of concern has been the problem of representation in the meditative sense of that word, that is, the question posed has been how well or badly do the various media reflect the existing balance of political forces and the existing political agenda'.*

*(Garnham 1993, p.361)*

Considering the fact that strong media is usually controlled and owned by the state in developing countries including Palestine, one must never ignore the great influence and significance of governments in the process of representation and civilians' political participation. It has been correctly argued that that *'it is representation that provides a basis for mediating between political leadership and public participation'* (Clark 2000, p. 45). Nevertheless, the process of representation is rather a mean, not an end. One of the main reasons why we defend the necessity of representation is that it represents a mode of social integration. By integrating citizens' arguments and social characteristics, you bring them against each other, you organize their attitudes, and you create a sort of unity inside the state. That explains why Neget and Kluge described the public sphere as a *'genuine articulation of a fundamental social need'* (Weisser 2002, p.75). But I would like to remind here that social integration must only be based on critical public discourse. It is again important to remind that the process of integration should be also seen as a part of the local political communication process, and though the government may or may not participate in the critical discourse, it is extremely momentous that the process of political communication is not based on a top-down approach. As I have mentioned earlier, the public sphere seeks to reach participative governance in which the problems of exclusion as well as lack of interaction and participation are addressed, such a process has been described by (Newsman, 2005) as means of engaging the public in responsibility for their own care and welfare; he noted that in participative governance the role of the state moves from 'Paternalistic' provider to 'participative' enabler.

## **2.5 Information and Media in the Public Sphere**

Alongside education, information played a serious role in helping the public to reach a considerable public opinion rather than merely a state of consensus. In order for citizens to reach

an agreement among themselves, it is imperative that they have both accessibility and freedom to receive and impart information. Perhaps the most significant sort of information in reference to the concept of the public sphere is the information about state activities; such information provides a subject matter to be discussed, scrutinized and criticized as well as a main drive for building up a rational public opinion. Habermas has explained that press in the bourgeois public sphere has made the circulation of news available, and that these news became 'raw materials for discussions', on the other hand; individuals used to read these news in privacy and discuss the matters of common concern in the public sphere. Consequently, the freedom of press was a challenge for the actors in the bourgeois public sphere, mainly because newsletters and journals constituted a ground for their arguments.

The role of media and information, being a central institution in the public sphere, has been a topic of debate among many theorists, for example; in the theory of communication action, the relationship between the individual and the state has become increasingly '*one of client or customer of services rather than citizens*' (Crossley & Roberts 2004, p.5). When individuals become increasingly dependent on the state, they lose their independence, and that affects their citizenships while at the same time renders the political argument lose its political edge by focusing on distribution of resources and domestic issues (Crossley & Roberts, 2004). This idea has been also addressed by theorists who argued that the growth of capital and governmental power has led the establishment of communication empires that worked on manipulating public opinions, and that a certain mechanism for insuring more selection and democratic access is required to respond to the growth of giant media organizations, and concentration of media ownerships (See Calhoun, 1993 & Penslar, 2000). On the other hand, Thomas McPhail (2006) has adopted an opposite trend by arguing that giant media corporations such as AOL, Disney, Time Warner, and Viacom are the main constituents of the future global sphere. Apparently, I think that McPhail's theory has little to do with the basic conditions of the public sphere, and that his focus is more or less directed towards economic expansion in a globalized world rather than the original aspirations of the public sphere.

The mechanism of news culture in constructing politics has been discussed by (Goode, 2005 & Spenser, 2005) who demonstrated that the ways news address politics today are far to correspond with Habermas's ideal model of the public sphere; Spenser noted that news works on depoliticizing politics by focusing on the entertainment of conflict, which indicates that the

narrative nature of reporting political news usually dramatizes and trivializes issues of social or public significance. Not to mention that by merely identifying citizens with officials' acts and speeches, media will be moving towards the version of representative democracy, which is able to create a public sphere in appearance only. A modern study about political communication on Arab world Television, (Ayish, 2002) displayed that television services in the Arab world, though they were enhanced technically in the last two decades, they remain obsessed with politics as the most important news selection criteria, and they keep empathizing their efforts on the Palestinian question. I think that such a study illustrates a good example about media focus on the entertainment of conflict, particularly if we consider the enormous political, democratic, economic, and social problems taking place in the Arab societies. On the other hand, other theorists have undermined the role of media as major obstacle in developing the public sphere; their argument was based on the fact that channels of interpersonal political communication, including citizens, leaders, activists and professional communicators, are more significant than the role of media (Maarek & Wolfsfeld, 2003). Negt and Kluge suggested that media and government have reciprocal relations giving an example of TV political debates, and they explain that by broadcasting such kinds of debates both media and politicians gain benefits; the former wins legitimacy and respectability while the latter sell their ideology (Weisser, 2002). On the other hand, Thussu (2000) explained how electronic and satellite media will assist in creating an international public sphere, he quotes Sparks (1998) as he writes:

*'In recent years, with the globalization of media and communication, there has been talk about the evolution of a "global public sphere" where issues of international significance - environment, human rights, gender and ethnic equality - can be articulated through the mass media, though the validity of such concept is also contested' (Thussu 2000, p.71).*

I think that the validity of such a global sphere is still questioned and perhaps impossible to reach under the current conditions of media and communication strategies.

In examining the link between media and participation, I would like to discuss briefly some relevant media theories that can largely affect the concept of the public sphere. *Modernization theory* which proposed that contact with media helped in the process of transition from 'traditional' to 'modernized' states, and that modernization ideas can be transferred from north to south through telecommunication technologies (Thussu, 2000), is not likely to be a useful step in establishing a democratic public sphere in many developing countries, for instance; some of these technologies such as satellite channels have been extensively used in the Arab world, and though

few of the channels functioned as a source of useful information, the majority of them had entertainment as their entire goal. Accordingly, it is assumed in that case that technology and transnational media did not have a noticeable positive influence over political participation, and that these technologies can stimulate both positive and negative sorts of participation. Some people have returned the dilemma to the use of top-down approaches in media industry, however; I think that several elements play different roles in this issue, many of them we have discussed earlier as fundamental pillars in the public sphere. One of the main theories that explain further regarding media systems in developing countries is the *development journalism or communication theory*. McPhail's description of this theory indicates how media in developing countries are away far from playing a positive role in developing any potential public sphere:

*'It is a media theory that encourages an engineered press - a press committed to government - set priorities and objectives. It assumes that all efforts including local media, need to work in unison to support national goals. Totalitarian regimes in a substantial number of peripheral nations follow and enforce this media theory and approach. Consequently, development journalism essentially serves to promote the needs of developing countries. It encourages indigenous media and discourages reproduction of Western Media models' (McPhail 2006, p 40, 41).*

In their discussion about the concept of *culture industry*, the Frankfurt School theorists have introduced another obstacle facilitated by media against citizens' socio-political participation. This approach known as the 'critical theory' suggests that the concentration of ownership of cultural production in few producers contributed in what they called a 'mass culture'; this culture is influenced by mass media and subjected to commercial rules. They argued that this process ensures a politically passive behavior, undermines critical engagement of masses with significant socio-political issues, and causes the subordination of working class to the ruling elite (Thussu, 2000). By carefully examining this approach, we realize a significant complication in media that badly affects two basic constituents of the public sphere: public discourse and citizens' participation. Perhaps the most important contribution in the field of media that approached the concept of the public sphere is what is called today *civic journalism*; this movement seeks to treat readers and community members as participants, while it attempts to place journalism as an active participant in community life, rather than as detached spectators. Just as the public sphere, this type of journalism is concerned with creating debates out of discussion forums, presenting issues and problems important to ordinary citizens, and measuring public opinion through the process of discussion and argument among community members. According to Hass (2004), advocates of civic journalism are concerned with enhancing the informational and deliberative

capacities of media and information, as well as in organizing sites for citizen deliberation such as community forums and voluntary civic organizations.

There are actually many recent studies that examined the relationship between press practices and the public sphere. One of the interesting researches made about the Jewish press in the contemporary diaspora compared with its pre-holocaust counterparts concluded that:

*'Certain high-quality journals of opinion have had a strong Jewish flavor (e.g. the Parisian Review, Commentary and the New Republic) but have not been explicitly instruments for the communication of news and debates about concerns of interest to the Jewish community'*

*(Penlar 2000, p.7)*

This sort of studies signifies the role of press and media as influential forms of public communication in the public sphere. Another study done by Altheide (2004) suggested that improving political communication is likely only to be successful by enhancing news organizations. On the other hand, Spenser (2005) discussed the relationship between peace politics and media, where he found out that trust and commitment in politics are major fundamentals for healthy communication between citizens and politicians. This study highlights the issue that balance between the state communication practices and politicians' behavior is an essential factor in developing local political communication, which is a central element in developing any public sphere.

It is quite worthy to remind finally that Habermas highlighted the role of news organizations as a double-edged instrument that can either increase or hinder the development of any public sphere, he suggested that the transformation of newspapers from 'publishing institutions' to instruments in the 'arsenal of party politics' contributed to the declination of the public bourgeoisie public sphere. This issue was also addressed by Sarman (2002) who suggested that it is important to consider the changing of news presentation, and thus the changing of politics, in measuring the transformation of people's public participation. I may argue here that it is the extent to which citizens see themselves as excluded or included by national media that largely affects their level of participation.

## **2.6 Summary**

The concept of the public sphere is not as simple as it is commonly used in different texts, nevertheless; it is a complex phenomenon where there are many different elements that determine

its foundation, development and genuine influence over state actions. Local political participation is one of the most significant aims the public sphere attempts to realize, and this sort of participation is likely to be formulated within a model of deliberative democracy where citizens are given the opportunity and resources to deliberate about their issues. On the other hand, the intellectuality of public discourse constitutes a fundamental condition in the effectiveness of any public sphere, upon which the rationality of public opinion is approached. It is also important to remind that political communication forms the main thread which connects the state with its citizen; the various characteristics of this communication process actually affect the formulation, productivity and continuity of the public sphere, as well as identify the level of political participation among citizens. Information and media, otherwise; are able to initiate forums of discussions that may develop into various public spheres depending on the availability of the pre-mentioned considerations. Eventually, I would like to point out that it is definitely impossible to combine all the elements of perfect democracy in a single concept, for instance; calling for an open public participation and expecting high rational arguments at the same time is unreasonable. However; in order to move from abstract notions to a set of practical practices, I would suggest that it is healthier to approach a rather limited but rational public sphere governed by reason and argument than an open public sphere characterized by ignorance or divisions.

### **3. Methods, Materials & Limitations**

Methods are defined as ‘*a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data*’ (Straus & Corbin 1998, p3). In my attempt to answer the two research questions that I have proposed earlier in the first chapter, I used qualitative research methods which imply ‘*a concentration on processes of meaning and understanding*’ (Philo et.al, 2004). The way qualitative research is usually conducted is different from the quantitative research; it can be about organizational functioning, behaviors or emotions, and the bulk of its analysis is rather interpretative, while its findings are not usually concluded by statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

In deed, I decided to use *qualitative methods* in my research due to several imperative reasons; *first*, I intended to have my work both relevant to non-academic and academic audiences (See Straus & Corbin, 1998). *Second*, since my research is focusing on describing and evaluating political communication aspects between Palestinian communities abroad and the state political and media systems, I think this type of method would be an appropriate form for my research as the power of its language is able to display ‘a picture of the world’ by using flexible and appropriate aspects of qualitative enquiry based on rational field study (Miller & Dingwall, 1997). *Thirdly*, qualitative methods can be helpful in gaining complex information and details about a certain phenomena which is difficult to learn about through quantitative research methods (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

#### **3.1 Materials & Methods**

In this research, I applied a case study among Sweden, England and Palestine. According to Wikipedia, a case study is a particular method of qualitative research that its methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event; it also lends itself especially to generating (rather than testing) hypotheses. The goal of my combined case study is to provide close-to-reality information concerning the standpoints of the Palestinian communities (PCs) abroad as well as the function of the state political and media offices in relation to them. In particular, the focus was driven towards the political communication process between educated Palestinians living or studying in these areas, and Palestinian official institutes responsible for the communication course. I basically chose to use a case study in this research because I intended to

examine a particular complex situation in which its final results can be possibly generalized to similar Palestinian contexts.

In order to serve the purpose of my empirical study, I used primary data consisting of both an *email list and qualitative interviews* which I intend to analyze qualitatively. Furthermore, I reviewed some secondary documents and information collected from some websites that belong to Palestinian official sides. These secondary documents were reviewed for increasing my understanding regarding different aspects of the state political and media institutions that I considered in my research.

### **3.1.1 Email List**

The first part of my empirical study includes an analysis for an email list. It includes eleven emails that were exchanged between the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2006 and the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2006. There are twenty three persons invited to this list, nevertheless; only seven participants took part in the discussion (three females and four males), all of the participants are highly educated Palestinians (B.A. and above), two of them live inside Gaza city, while the other five participants are staying in London currently. In Gaza city, both participants are females who are employed in different organizations that do not belong to the PA, while participants in London are varied; two of them are PhD students, while the rest are already graduates and have different jobs. I have interviewed three of the participants in London when I was there. The email list is entitled '*Palestine: Post Election Results*', the discussion in these emails is about the results of the recent Palestinian parliamentary elections that took place in Palestine on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2006. I was invited by the participants in this discussion to join this list on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2006, but I did not participate myself in any of the debates. The names of the participants will neither appear in the analysis text nor in the references. This is due to privacy reasons as well as to the importance of detachment from any personal information during my analysis. Thus, I referred to any participant's name by the sign xx throughout out the analysis text, while in case there are two names in the same line, I referred to them as xx1 and xx2. The emails texts can possibly be obtained for academic purposes by contacting me personally.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative Interviews**

Interviews are common used tools by qualitative researchers, according to Lindolf & Bryan (2002); qualitative interviews are conducted to understand people's perspectives on a scene, to

retrieve their experience from the past, to obtain descriptions of events that are normally unavailable for observation, to perceive sensitive relationships, and to create recorded data that can be analyzed. In my research, I used *in-depth qualitative interviews* that have distinct purposes from normal interviews. They are designed to improve deep knowledge in a certain area, thus; they are usually planned and prepared in advance, and it has to go into matters in depth (Wengraf, 2001). Basically, the aim of my interviews was to gain deep information about certain aspects of the project I am conducting, I wanted to get familiar with the involved sides that are related to my research question, as well as to draw a picture that includes all the considerable related elements and views about my research problem. Therefore, I used semi-structured interviews which drive at '*achieving defined answers to defined questions, while leaving time for further development of those answers and including more open questions*' (Walliman 2005, p.285). That allowed me both to get answers for my defined questions about the topic, and to leave a space for the informants to express their views and experiences on various topics that can be possibly important to this research. This advantage of qualitative interviewing was discussed by Philo et.al (2004) in addition to another benefit which is the interviewer's ability to check that informants have fully understood the questions, and that answers reflect what is actually believed. According to Walliman (2005), qualitative interviews provide very important information when they are done at an early stage of the research, not only to know the direction of the research but also to prioritize issues.

In choosing my sample for the interviews, I used a *non-random sampling*; a technique where '*the researcher selects what he or she thinks is a typical sample*' (Walliman, P.277). I had *two different categories* that I wanted to involve in my sample. The *first one* included officials, who are representatives or experts in the Palestinian state institutions that are relevant to my research. I employed the technique by visiting the institutes that I wanted to interview, and there I searched for persons who are either representatives or experts in these institutions so that they can provide knowledge about the institution they belong to. The *second category* included highly educated Palestinians who either live or study in both London and Stockholm. Since there is no existing data base in both countries regarding this category, I have set two influential conditions that I decided for choosing my informants in the second category; first to be a Palestinian, and second, to have at least a B.A university degree in any subject. The importance of these two conditions is related to the part of my theoretical framework regarding the 'public sphere', and to the fact that I wanted to collect rather valuable and rational views as well as opinions in relation to my research

topic. I did not have any other particular age or gender conditions for any of the conducted interviews; this is mainly because such conditions do not affect the particular political communication process which I am examining in my research.

I used a *snowballing sampling technique* for choosing the informants in the second category in particular; a type of purposive sampling where *'participants are chosen according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question'* (quoted in Wikipedia). In this method, the chosen informants help the researcher find other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the research. Thus, I was able to interview a total number of eight Palestinians in both countries who were matching the criteria that I laid down in advance.

I have conducted *fifteen interviews* in total; one female and fourteen males. The interviews were done in London, Stockholm and Gaza during December 2005, January 2006 and April 2006. I interviewed *seven people* to cover my first category, and they included both Palestinian ambassadors in London and Stockholm, two high officials at *the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (MOFA), director of Information Department at *the Palestinian Ministry of Information* (MNFO), director of Palestinian National Information Center at *the State Information Service* (SIS), and an experienced editor at *Palestine News Agency* (Wafa). In this category, I asked officials to present both their official and personal opinion about the topics that we discussed.

On the other hand, I conducted another *eight interviews* in both London and Stockholm to cover the second category; four in each capital. Fourteen interviews were *done face-to-face* as I intended to discuss the proposed questions in a free and flexible manner with my participants, and *only one interview was done via email* because I could not reach this informant during the time I spent in London. In order to have accurate answers for my analysis, I used a digital recorder in all face-to-face interviews. I conducted eight interviews in English, while the rest were done in Arabic. I did translate all Arabic interviews into English, and then transcribed all recorded interviews and saved them at my computer. In general, all of the fifteen interviews reflect on various themes of my research depending on the interviewed category; whether politicians, state media employees, or citizens in the diaspora. These themes will be presented, explained and discussed extensively in the following two chapters. As it is the case in the email list, the informant's names will neither be displayed in the analysis text nor in the reference list. This is also due to privacy reasons, and in order to assure that the research develops under objective conditions.

### **3.2 Analysis of Collected Data**

In the analytical part of my research, I intend to deal with the collected data in an exploratory sense; Tom (2001) illustrated the exploratory research by quoting Kvale (1996), as he indicates that such research introduces:

*'...an issue, an area to be charted, or a problem complex to be uncovered...the interviewer follows up on the subject's answers and seeks new information about and new angles on the topic' (Tom 2001, p. 23).*

In general, qualitative methods *'often focus on a partial set of relationships in a scene'* (Lindolf & Bryan 2002, p.18) which is a major purpose in the analytical part of my research; to study all possible sides of the complex relationships that characterizes the political communication process between state political and media institutes at one hand, and Palestinian communities on the other hand. This study is supposed to create a more coherent image of this complex network through qualitative analysis techniques:

*'Qualitative researchers, they argue, commonly use the aesthetic forms of Montage, in which images of social life are juxtaposed to create a larger narrative, and pentimento, in which obscure elements of social life are restored for consideration' (Lindolf & Bryan 2002, p.19).*

In order to analyze the concepts that arise from the interviews, I will use *the meaning-categorization analysis technique*. Tom (2001) referred to Kvale (1996) as he explained that such process involves:

*'...grouping statement by conceptual categories that can be developed in advance or they can arise ad hoc during the analysis, they may be taken from theory or from the vernacular, as well as the interviewees' own idioms' (Tom 2001, p.24).*

The theories I introduced earlier in this research will reside in, and be revealed by, the categories emerging from both interviews and email lists. I will search for and plan different categories (that will also arise from the texts) in connection with my theoretical part and both research questions. The developed categories will facilitate describing and analyzing the standpoints that are involved in my research. It is quite significant to state here that both the email list and qualitative interviews will be analyzed separately as the goal of analysis may not be identical in both cases. The analysis process will be done without using any computerized software, however; I still may use the 'search' function in Microsoft Word.

### **3.3 Limitations and Shortcomings of Qualitative Research**

Several theorists argued that there are many limitations that characterizes qualitative research, *'it is often claimed that that qualitative research is 'soft', 'subjective', and speculative', while quantitative research is 'hard', 'objective' and 'hypothesis-testing'* (Miller & Dingwall 1997, p.24). Other criticism focused on the subjective nature of the qualitative research as the researcher *'decides which quotes or specific examples to report, in addition to the lack of explicit research procedures'* (Lindolf et.al 2002, p.58). Furthermore, critics have argued that there are certain dilemmas that can affect the reliability of qualitative interviews; such dilemmas are mainly related to the conditions under which interviews are conducted:

*'It is a deliberately created opportunity to talk about something that the interviewer is interested in and that may or may not be of interest to the respondent. If the interviewer refuses to propose topics, the respondent is obliged to guess what might be relevant until the interviewer gives some indication that he or she is happy with the line being taken...Whether of interest or not, the respondent is still concerned to bring the occasion off in a way that demonstrates his or her competence as a member of whatever community is invoked by the interview topic'* (Miller & Dingwall 1997, p.59).

Add to that other problems related to scientific fraud, which is known as *'the violation of the standard codes of scholarly conduct and ethical behavior in professional scientific research'* (quoted in Wikipedia). This deception can actually be made for personal gains, or through researcher's bias that can be built in the research if the researcher has pre-determined answers for his research enquiry.

#### **3.3.1 Discussion of Possible Limitations and Shortcomings in my Research**

As I explained earlier, bias and reliability of information are possible problems in any qualitative research. As I have collected my main data through qualitative interviews, this means that the questions asked and the respondents' answers contribute directly to the final findings of my research. Therefore, in order to avoid bias and subjectivity as much as possible, I attempted to seek objectivity through gaining distance and giving a space for my informants to express their viewpoints freely on the topics we discussed. This technique demonstrates how informants view the situation they live in, and it is a well-know method that qualitative researchers use to achieve objectivity *'In qualitative research, objectivity does not mean controlling the variables. Rather, it means openness, a willingness to listen and to "give voice" to respondents'* (Straus & Corbin 1998, p.43).

On the other hand, it has been argued that reliability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the findings are separated from accidental circumstances of the research. In my research, I have checked the reliability of the information I received from my respondents either by returning to secondary documents, or by comparing different views from different respondents. Silverman points out that '*checking the reliability is closely related to assuring the quality of field notes and guaranteeing the public access to the process of their production*' (Silverman 2004, p.285). I would like to remind also that the line of argument followed in my research is both deductive and inductive, and that the validity of the results can be observed through examining the findings in relation to the argument presented (Walliman, 2005).

Another issue is that there is a clear distinction between the number of female and male interviewees. There was definitely no previous intention towards any gender imbalance during the time I made my interviews. However, this can be returned to *four reasons*: *First*, even though gender balance would be a favorable choice for me, I did not consider gender as a main condition in choosing my category of respondents, this is because such an issue, in my opinion, does not affect the characteristics of the political communication process that I have examined. *Second*, it was important for me to apply only the crucial and necessary conditions in choosing my informants due to the limited time I had for collecting data in various locations. *Thirdly*, by using the snowballing sampling technique, the process of finding informants become dependent on the few recommendations I received concerning other persons who can fit into the pre-determined standards of the research, and it happened that the vast majority of them were males, unlike the case in the email list. *Fourthly*, I used a non-random sampling technique in interviewing the state personnel; this indicates that I decided where the phenomenon actually represents itself, and consequently I employed a purposive sampling in choosing my sample to serve the aim of my research.

The Palestinian ambassador in England has been only for one month in his position at the time I met him in London. This refers that he did not have equal information about aspects of the Palestinian life in England compared with his counterpart in Sweden who have been there for more than twenty years. However, I already knew this information before I met him, and I focused my questions on the new strategy of the PA towards the PCs abroad.

All of the interviews were conducted through face-to-face communication, and only one interview was done by email. This interview has been actually conducted after I was done with

the majority of the interviews, and thus, it was easy for me to define exactly the questions that I want to put forward for this informant. Consequently, no misunderstanding did occur, and the information I received was enough, clear and correspondent to the questions I formulated.

### ***3.4 Ethical Considerations***

I would like to voice your concern that the aims of my research lie within an ethical framework; they have the goal of achieving a gain rather than causing any harm. Otherwise, I affirm that I have avoided plagiarism, and that I have been honest and transparent in explaining my methods. I also confirm that I will analyze that data in regard with these ethical rules, and that I am responsible and accountable for the information provided in this paper.

### ***3.5 Summary***

I have utilized a qualitative research method to deal with my research problem, the empirical materials I used consists of eleven emails that were exchanged among a number of Palestinian citizens both in London and Gaza. In addition, I have conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews in London, Stockholm, and Gaza. I used a non-random sampling technique for choosing my informants. The interviews were planned to cover two main categories: the first category includes highly-educated Palestinians both in London and Stockholm, while the second category includes the main responsible official institutes in the political communication course between the Palestinian leadership and the PCs abroad. The materials collected will be analyzed separately by employing the meaning-categorization technique, which will generate different categories that may arise both from the text or the theoretical background.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, I will present my findings through the analysis of my materials. As both my research questions are very related to each other, I will start first analyzing the *email list* mainly to provide an account for the first research question, while I will analyze the *interviews* afterwards to provide the results connected with the second research question, yet; a part of the interviews analysis also reflects on the first thesis question. The presentation and discussion of my findings will be classified into different themes that are closely related to the theoretical base of my research.

I would like also to point out that I have chosen to include a relatively large number of the informants' viewpoints in this chapter, and this is actually due to several reasons; first, the informants' statements make up a very important and indispensable source of information regarding the topic discussed, and it is important that these comments appear alongside the discussion as they are considered a part of the argument most of the time. Second, one of the aims of the research is to shed the light on a variety of multi-sided views and standpoints regarding the research problem, thus I had considered ordering such views and positions under a certain organizational structure that develops the argument on a linear track. Thirdly, the included arguments or statements bring up first-hand information mingled with different useful judgments, which assist describing the characteristics of the political communication process more clearly and precisely.

### 4.1 Email List Findings & Analysis

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the findings and analysis related to the email list, therefore; the thematic characteristics and constituents of the public sphere should be highly considered when reading the following context.

#### 4.1.1 Topics of Discussion

Although participants mainly addressed a political issue which is the recent Palestinian parliamentary elections, there are many significant subtopics that were highlighted throughout the discussion in order to elaborate different arguments: 1- Change and reform '*I agree with you, we are in a bad need for change and reform*', 2- Corruption '*There is no doubt that Fatah is in urgent need to question its last performance within the last ten years...years full of institutional*

*corruption*', 3- Mismanagement '*I think many Fatah supporters gave their votes to Hamas just to revenge the mismanagement of Fatah*' 4- Salaries '*Hamas will lock Palestinians inside their villages and will not be able to give them salaries either Salaries*', 5-Insecurity '*lots of difficulties and people here have lost their trust in it due to corruption and insecurity*' 6- Democracy '*I am proud that many other countries envy the democracy we had proved through this election*', 7- Israeli violations '*the reality of occupation, assassination, checkpoints...etc. proves the accuracy of this idea*', 8- Civil society and economy '*This means a radical ideological change will be imposed on the Palestinian civil society, life, legislations, economy*'. There are also other themes that basically tackled the fight between Hamas and Fateh over power, and the communication strategies between each of these parties and their Palestinian supporters.

I have obviously noticed that both major and minor topics addressed in this discussion are about public issues that appeal to the Palestinian national interests, none of the issues discussed were private or related to any of the participants' personal welfares. One can say, otherwise; that many of the society needs were articulated within this debate. Even when it comes to the greetings at the introduction part of each email, they are mostly directed to the whole group, and characterized by being short '*Hi every one*', friendly '*Warm even hot Salams to all of you*', and agreeable in manner '*Thanks for enriching each other's knowledge and experience by sharing your thoughts*'.

As arguments developed around the Palestinian recent parliamentary elections, the main topic discussed was the structure and function of the new government, where the subtopics comprised important issues connected with citizens' life in Palestine.

#### **4.1.2 Communication Channel**

Apparently, the communication channel used by participants is an *electronic mail list* facilitated by yahoo service, nonetheless; it is not a yahoo established forum that is usually created for ongoing discussions over a long period of time. The dialogue seems to be started between two friends who soon invited the rest of the participants to join the discussion '*please note that I have copied some friends on the same. It would be great to listen to different views. So...everyone please feel free to join this discussion*'. The principle of accessibility is achieved here since there are twenty three persons having an access to read the different views as well as the opportunity to express their opinions freely about the topic. However; I can say that the level of accessibility is

limited by *two conditions*; the *first one* is that only invited people are able to take part in this forum, and *second*; participation is conditioned to be focusing on the discussion topic. All of the actual participants in the debate fit into those two conditions. I also noticed that the chosen mean of communication implies *Seven Essential Characteristics*:

1. As the debate is facilitated by a private email list in the net sphere, the process of communication was free from any governmental monitoring or control as well as from any threat that can be caused by fanatic persons belonging to the political parties mentioned in the forum. Thus, participants did not tend to use anonymous titles, and they were able to keep up the critical edge of the conversation without any censorship.
2. Democracy is implied in the forum in two major senses; first, the principles of the freedom of speech and accessibility are available, second; the right for equal participation is also considered as there is no particular moderator responsible for editing or deleting any of the sent emails.
3. This debate lies within a civic participatory forum and not an institutionalized one.
4. The use of a private email list indicates a meaning for deliberation that participants facilitated by themselves for containing their discussion. The communication pool is not established by a news agency website or a particular political institution.
5. In order for the discussion to go on, participants were not required to disturb their personal schedules to meet at a certain time or point. The Internet sphere could successfully gather participants (both males and females) from England and Gaza in the same debate, and made argument possible to create at anytime within the 24 hours of the day.
6. The communication channel is created for the sole purpose of discussion, and this relates to the argued need for dialogue in connection with the qualities of citizenship that were discussed earlier in the theoretical part of this research.
7. The choice of a private email list as a communication tool demystifies that there is no intention for publicizing the issues discussed within this forum. This fact highly reflects on the discussion aims that will be presented later in this chapter.

### 4.1.3 Participants

Participants in this forum are all Palestinian highly educated citizens, not all of them know each other, and they are all economically independent from the PA. I also noticed that some of the participants have political affiliations, nevertheless; this did not play a role in restricting the discussion within a particular school of thought, on the other hand; it helped in showing the participants' objective and rational attitudes. For example, some of the statements spelled out by participants in regard with their political parties are: *'although being Fathawe, but like many other young people, I lost hope in the Fateh leadership'*, *'being a Fateh member myself, I would like everyone to assist in this victory of democracy'*. In fact, it does not sound strange for me that some participants are connected to certain political parties, and I do not think either that this is the reason why they decided to take part in the discussion. It is very common among Palestinians to be supportive for either Fateh or Hamas parties being the biggest political parties in Palestine, and this does not necessarily entail that one should be active in any of the parties' activities.

The common factor of high education among the different participants played a very significant role in facilitating and developing the flow of discussion, I did not observe any misunderstandings that occurred during the debate, on contrary; participants depended on each others' views as their base for their coming argument, for instance; you may find one of the participants starting his/her argument by writing *'xx, there is probably a great deal of truth in your argument below. However, why did not Palestinians give their votes to Fateh, even if they wanted to vote for resistance?'* or *'I agree with xx that the West, the US and even Israel are not aiming at politically assassinate Hamas'*.

It actually sounds reasonable to argue that the discussion would face lots of challenges before it starts if the participants were not having the following characteristics in common; *first*, being all highly educated, which guaranteed the avoidance of any unnecessary disturbance and helped developing the line of argument forward, *second*; having all the opportunity to participate through the internet regardless their residence locations, *thirdly*; being economically independent from the state, which indicates that the discussion has been developed not for achieving certain personal gains, but for handling a national issue of public concern through an exchange of arguments, and *fourthly*; being all Palestinian citizens informed about the political event by media as well as interested in the 'topic of discussion', as they deliberated by themselves to start the forum and take part in it voluntarily. This example exactly shows how the availability of

motivations, resources, and opportunities can have a remarkable impact over citizens' deliberation towards participation in general, and it also illustrates that the process of transformation from an 'informed citizen' to a 'deliberative one' in this case is confined to a set of characteristics and qualifications that can possibly vary among individuals.

#### **4.1.4 Quality of Argument**

The arguments exchanged among the different participants included several elements which are significant to consider in our judgment to the quality of discourse.

#### **I. Questions Raised**

I have distinguished many questions that were raised by participants during the ongoing argument, and due to the large number of these questions; they constituted an important phenomena by themselves in the discussion forum. These are the *main quotations proposed* in a form of questions in the debate:

1. *Why did not Palestinians give their votes to Fateh, even if they wanted to vote for resistance? Fateh after all has always maintained its image as a resistance movement despite all talks/accords with Israel*
2. *I am not thinking much of Fatah loss because it is taken for granted, what I care more to know is the alternative, the second choice...would it be up to responsibility with all its meanings?*
3. *The question is Will Hamas maintain the economic status that Fatah built with its good relations with US and Europe?*
4. *Another important question here, I think, is whether a real transfer of power will take place at all. I personally can not see Fatah handing over security institutions (power) to Hamas? Do you?*
5. *Now the question is since Fatah is fully aware that Hamas needs it in order to fulfill its political tasks internationally, Fatah is refusing to take part in the coming government, don't you think that Fatah is still putting their own interests above the national interest, don't you think that Fatah by refusing the reality that Hamas won, they are somehow bringing people into a strait?*
6. *The core question however is whether Israel and the West (specifically) would chose to do so i.e. assassinate Hamas politically. Will they look at these recent developments as a chance to ASSASSINATE Hamas politically or an opportunity to CONTAIN Hamas?*
7. *How would the West (US. and Israel) accept or allow that Hamas gets openly in relation with Iran, Iran that is being targeted?*
8. *Will the EU and USA force Hamas to compromise its ideology or vice versa?*

Although not identical to that order that I arranged by myself here, these questions that were initially suggested by participants in the email list had a very similar order to this one. I am basically emphasizing the point of order because it extremely facilitates observing the development of the participants' line of thoughts alongside the questions they propose. In the first question, the issue addressed is the reason behind the wining of Hamas over Fateh in the elections, which indicates that participants are trying to explain why did the elections results turned to be that way at the first place. *In questions 2, 3, 4, 5*, the focus is directed towards internal developments that will take place in connection with that wining; in particular Hamas's capacity to deal with its new position, and Fateh's move towards surrendering power. *In questions 6, 7, 8*, there is a shift of focus from local to international developments related to the future relations between the West, Israel and EU at one hand, and the government of Hamas on the other hand. All of the pre-mentioned areas are rather complicate issues that are impossible to resolve in simple answers, and all of them emerged to be important issues covered by mass media during and after this discussion Thus, I see that these questions were proposed as open-ended questions that required further arguments and analysis for approaching their answers, and I think that they there are three main goals participants tried to approach by proposing these questions; *first*, to disclose significant issues that are not addressed by media, probably the reason why they were basically emerged as unanswered questions, *second*; to enrich the arguments by encouraging each other to think deeply about the major implications of the discussed political event, and *thirdly*; to predict the possible actions that may take place in sequence to the formation of the new government, and thus draw a comprehensive image about the situation including its long-term dimensions.

## **II. Analysis of the Political Situation**

In their attempt to understand the coming political situation, participants tended to exchange arguments that dealt with the questions they raised above to a great extent, basically, the arguments can be classified into three major categories:

The *first category* includes arguments attempting to explain the reasons which made the results of the elections in favor of Hamas, for example; these are some of their statements regarding this point:

- 1. I think many Fateh supporters gave their votes to Hamas just to revenge the mismanagement of Fateh.*

2. *I wonder how stupid their demand of having another chance was. Hello!!! Even my little daughter would not trust me if I use Fateh management style with her.*
3. *People were looking for an alternative!!*
4. *By all means, Hamas had capitalized on Fateh's administrative failure and took great advantage of people's frustration with the PA.*
5. *Well, I do not doubt Hamas organizational skills, self-determination and self-respect in dealing with institutions. However, the logo of 'calling for reform and change' was the easy way for them to win elections and take over.*
6. *I do not totally agree with this view, I believe Hamas won the elections via penetrating the mindset of Palestinians who are now more adoptive of resistance than ever.*
7. *It is extremely visible in the previous arguments that participants had different explanations in regard with the elections results; they basically attempted to brainstorm the possible answers for what happened drawn from their previous knowledge about the subject.*

The *second category* includes a bigger portion of arguments dealing with the future of Hamas government particularly in relation with Fateh, Israel, EU and the West; the following is a part of their discussion on this issue:

1. *I personally doubt that Hamas will be able to deliver.*
2. *Hamas's only chance will be through having a coalition government with Fateh. They realize this very well and have been asking for it (Fateh has been refusing this so far. Hamas can not handle security coordination with ISRAEL; neither can they handle communication with Western governments???) Meaning that without Fateh faces in the forefront...Hamas needs Fateh in order to deliver and function.*
3. *I think that Fateh (with the help of US and Israel) can assassinate Hamas politically...If the people won't get salaries for 1 or 2 months they will revolt against Hamas and kick it out of power. Hamas will then realize that unless it invests in its relationship with the West (through a change of attitude towards Israel) they will stay for ever on the opposition side of the formula. Dreaming of power, as I think they do, they would compromise in a way or another.*
4. *I agree with you on some points...but I doubt that the west want to assassinate Hamas politically...the west is aiming to give a chance to Hamas to change according to their agenda 'I wonder if they will manage?'*
5. *I agree with xx that the West, the US and even Israel are not aiming at politically assassinate Hamas. At least for a short coming period...I think that if the US and Israel...wanted Hamas to be involved in the new government, as Israel thought that by taking part in the government, Hamas would abide by the peace agreements concluded between the PA and Israel and would abandon its principles and aims that threaten*

*Israel's existence. If I can say that Israel is currently "USING" the Palestinian society to pressure on Hamas.*

- 6. I think that Hamas is currently in a dilemma. From one side, they do not want to abandon their methodology. And from the other side, as a new government, are seeking to maintain the relations with the US and the West. That is why they requested from Fateh to take part in the new government. They want Fateh to be in the front line and continue its contacts and relations in order to obtain the required support and donations.*
- 7. It seems that Israel and the US realized Hamas's weight in Palestinian politics while Fateh became no longer a partner in decision making because of their weak leadership which can't impose their ideology on even its followers. It seems that Israel wants to reach agreements with the strong.*
- 8. Already the EU and USA are confused about their position, they don't want to support Hamas but at the same time they want to pursue aid to the PA. If Hamas succeeds in obtaining the money from the two main donors then the whole equation and definition of terrorism and its association with Palestinians will be changed. However, if Hamas compromises its principles, then it would be committing a political suicide.*

It is quite important to point out here that the previous discussion is neither partisan nor disguised; one can hardly notice any visible prejudices or fanatic support to either Hamas or Fateh, while arguments seemed to be expressed freely and without any fear or hesitation. On the other hand, Participants agree with each other not following their political affiliations or friendship relations, nonetheless; the best argument receives more agreement and reliability. Just as the bourgeoisie society in the Habermasian public sphere disregarded their social status during public discussions, arguments in this email list took precedence over friendship and affiliations. Another important observation in the previous arguments is that there were many actors introduced in the analyzed scene including Hamas, Fateh, PA, U.S., EU, Israel and the West. The variety of the presented actors points toward the comprehensive nature of the argument as well as the participants' capacity to analyze the current circumstances both on the local and international levels.

The *third category* deals with the participants' endeavor to find out solutions for the dilemma they predicted to occur after Hamas won the government; I could distinguish the following two quotations which imply two different solutions:

- 1. Solutions? Well Hamas should change their hard-line religious constitutions, and by the way I am not against religions, I just do not think that religions should be made ideologies. I do not mind if Hamas or any party becomes a faith based but not religious.*

2. *In any case I agree with xx1 and xx2 that all parties should priorities the Palestinian national interest over their battles with each other. I am almost convinced that Fateh should join the government and ensure that Palestinians won't suffer economically because of Hamas' inadequacy to deal with western foreign governments at this stage.*

In regard with the latter solution which was noticeably agreed by three participants, I had two observations; *first*, this solution was presented at a later stage of the discussion, and *second*, the rest of the participants did not disagree with such solution. Thus, I assume here that a sort of agreement was achieved among participants concerning this proposal, which prioritizes the Palestinian national welfare over the political parties' agendas, and provides for a rational solution where both parties have to compromise for the sake of the 'best interests of the Palestinian population'. It is also worth mentioning that such an answer particularly appeals to the discussion aims that will be presented in a later part of this chapter.

Apart from the three previous categories, there are two more key features that obviously influenced the quality of argument; the *first feature* relates to the participants' tendency to revise history in order to support their argument; the following quotations show that examples retrieved from history are very relevant when discussing the current political situation:

1. *We take as example what happened in Egypt in the 60s and in Algeria in the 90s when movements similar to Hamas were about to take control though they were somehow elected by their own people that is exactly what is happening here, of course in Egypt the movement failed to fulfill its political tasks and maintain good contact with the west and some Arab countries, and thereby failed to accomplish what they have already promised their people...what happened in Algeria after the elections in 90s could have happened here, terror broke out due to fights between two biggest and hottest parties supported by international allies whereas Algerians paid the price!*
2. *It seems that Israel wants to reach agreements with the strong, the same way they did with Fatih when Arafat was leading the party...In Israeli, the 'Likud party' has always been easier to deal with than the 'Labour' despite their radical views. This is because they are the strongest...It is also important to remember that Hamas has contributed a lot in resistance.*

As it appears clearly in those quotations, participants returned to history in order to enrich their understanding about the present. This way of thinking is very much appreciated in scientific argument where a particular phenomenon is attached to other similar phenomena in order to broaden the level of understanding as well as increase the reliability of analysis.

The *second feature*, however; is connected with the participants' perpetual follow up of media news, which undoubtedly appeared clearly in their argument. These are some of the quotations I distinguished in the forum vis-à-vis this point:

1. *Economically speaking, yesterday, Hamas leader said that Hamas "the representative of Palestinians" wont stand cross handed if the west are not willing to fund, Hamas has its own friends in Iran and the whole world whom he called "honest bodies" will definitely give their financial and political support to Hamas at least till it stands on feet politically.*
2. *It was very interesting to have seen Mufaz the other day 'praising' Hamas acting 'responsibly' since after the elections results! On the other hand, Israeli intelligence says they anticipate attacks by Fateh 'angry' factions!!! Isn't it funny?*
3. *Yesterday, on CNN, in a hot debate, a lady spoke on behalf of a German funding Association said "we will give Hamas a chance to prove its 'good intentions' and that it is not seeking any destruction in the area! Therefore we won't stop fund at least within the coming months".*

Those quotations demonstrate that the discussion among participants was also influenced and supported by opinions of different actors in the political landscape. These opinions as it appeared are drawn from distinct sides including the West, Israel and Hamas. A very interesting implication which reflects on the participants' success to consider a variety of opinions in developing their discussion, and points up the fact that participants are attentive and aware of the recent developments regarding the situation from assorted sides.

As I have presented the structure and techniques used by the different participants to develop their arguments, it is obvious that the arguments went through different stages before a certain agreement was achieved. Participants raised several complex questions regarding the political situation, and then attempted to answer such questions by means of argumentation; which comprised a large analytical part that interfered in history, and incorporated a variety of standpoints expressed by various political actors. Then, some solutions were presented individually, and they were more or less accepted in common even if a particular consensus by participants was not expressed explicitly. The validity of arguments can be observed in their rational and educative nature as well as their success in evading from manipulative or demonizing language. Therefore, it can be concluded that the theoretical agreement reached was actually a result of a systematic building-up process of different arguments, which were focused and kept on a linear track through out the whole formation route.

#### 4.1.5 Discussion Values

In fact, the previous arguments had several significant characteristics that I already highlighted during my discussion earlier, however; I would like to add here three influential points pertaining to the values of such debate:

1. The discussion succeeded in developing its professional edge; as it did not allow any space for selling particular ideologies neither did it include any compromises or negotiations over personal welfares.
2. Many of the issues the participants discussed were predicted correctly; which means that most of the arguments above turned out to become political facts some time after the discussion was over. If anybody follows the major news headlines that followed Hamas electoral winning, he/she will recognize the extreme similarity between what has been expected in the discussion, and what took place in reality such as the emerging violence between Fateh and Hamas, the obstacles towards payment of employees' salaries, the frequent misunderstandings between the president and Hamas government, Israel's punishments to the new government, the EU and the West standpoints in regard with Hamas...etc. This point is worthy to consider in measuring the reliability as well as the quality of such arguments.
3. There are certain reasons and credits that determined the current image and structure of this discussion; these reasons relates to participants' qualifications, topic of discussion, mean of communication, aim of discussion and so on. On the other hand; there are many news websites nowadays such as 'Al Arabiyya' which attempts to create the same kind of discussion among its readers, yet; the results extremely fell short, and the discussion pool tends to witness a distraction in its original aims. Sometimes the discussion area becomes a battle field for contested fanatic views as rational attitudes can hardly be distinguished within such a confused environment. Thus, the result usually consist a variety of opinions with unsystematic development or reasoning, which is an impossible situation for developing any rational public opinion.

#### 4.1.6 Discussion Aims

There are certainly several objectives that led to the emergence of this discussion; here I attempted to include only the ones that participants expressed indirectly during their arguments, and I listed them below so that to illuminate the *participants' different motivations* for taking part in this political argument:

1. The new political situation was unusual for many of the participants, and that pushed them to express their thoughts and opinions about the coming stage. I found lots of expressions referring to this point such as; *'Well...what a situation..! a scary one I would say'*, *'Hi every one, A lot of interesting thoughts on the matter which has taken us all by surprise'*, or *'Post election era is interesting to observe'*.
2. All of the participants who live outside the OPT did not get the chance to take part in the voting process, and this discussion forum somehow materialized their wish to participate in the political process: *'I and few other friends, while in Gaza, were talking about other big opposing faction taking over the power instead of Fateh. Here the day comes'* or *'If I were in Gaza at the election time, I would not vote for Fateh as one party. I'd rather vote for few persons who I know how they are capable of bringing the good for our people'*
3. Some of the participants thought that by being involved in such a rich discussion, it will be a good opportunity to exchange views and learn deeply about the new political situation in the OPT: *'It would be great to listen to different views. So...everyone please feel free to join this discussion'* or *'I believe there are many lessons to learn from what happened in last election specifically and in the last 10 years of the PA ruling Gaza'*.
4. Participants were very concerned about the Palestinian public welfare *'I care for the economic situation of our people more than anything...we will see how things develop'*, *'It is not about who is better, but how we can make Palestine and the future better'* or *'I have confidence in Palestinian leadership to deal with the new situation regardless to which party it belongs'*.
5. Being all Palestinians, participants proved to have a good knowledge about the political affairs in Palestine, which basically made it easier for them to participate in such a debate *'I have lived the last 10 years in Gaza and was very close to both parties' supporters'*.

6. As I explained earlier, participants sought to reach conclusions and find answers for lots of complicated questions regarding the present situation.
7. Participants wanted to define their citizenship roles in relation to the new government *'How we in the diaspora can do to strengthen that call for the end of occupation and emphasis Palestinian right'*.

The direction in the discussion forum is apparently towards the 'common good'. It is crystal clear that participants did not take part in the discussion for building a network of relations or due to their concern about their personal affairs. As I mentioned before, they are all economically independent and any change in the political system would not affect them at all as they actually reside in the diaspora. On the other hand, on contrary to the bourgeois public sphere, which concentrated its efforts to scrutinize the state power in relation to its citizens' needs, this discussion here had a more patriotic aim as it focused mainly on the Palestinian government policy, which is an issue that affects the general Palestinian welfare in return.

#### **4.1.7 Conclusion of Discussion**

Through my reading to the several arguments, I noticed that some participants started to sum up the discussion at a later stage. In the *eighth email*, an important conclusion appeared when one of the participants' proposed that Fateh should join Hamas government for the sake of the Palestinian people:

*'In any case I agree with xx1 and xx2 that all parties should priorities the Palestinian national interest over their battles with each other. I am almost convinced that Fateh should join the government and ensure that Palestinians won't suffer economically because of Hamas' inadequacy to deal with western foreign governments at this stage'.*

This conclusion is apparently agreed by three of the participants. In the *ninth and tenth emails*, however; participants started to show their agreements to the previous arguments; I picked up these statements from both emails in order to illustrate this point:

1. *You are right xx; reform was definitely one of Hamas's strongest cards.*
2. *The post election era will be very interesting to observe mainly from the point of view of who is going to impose their views on whom.*

3. *Over the decades each party, PLFP, Fateh, and now Hamas, has played an important role in Palestinian politics. Each has had its strengths and weaknesses, let's hope that the new one has learned enough from the experiences of others.*
4. *You have good points xx. I agree with your analysis.*

The last email in the group discussion had taken a different form; it is the only email that deals with the issue in a practical way, which is not a surprise after a sort of agreement or satisfaction was achieved among participants in regard with the theoretical part of the discussion. I quoted most of the email parts as it is interesting to perceive how the discussion actually ended:

*'Dear all... I read some of your analysis... but for me most important now is how to strengthen the new government call for peace..... Hamas or Fateh ... both wants peace with different way... above all Palestinian people wants peace...So the way I look at... How we in the diaspora can do to strengthen that call for the end of occupation and emphasis Palestinian rights... most important now is how Hamas looks at all joint organizations effort for peace and reconciliation...please... What do you suggest?'*

The previous paragraph signifies that the coming emails should be focusing on the participants' role in influencing the political situation back home. However, there were no more emails sent to develop a new track of discussion concerning this vital issue.

To summarize, I think the way participants influenced each other, and the way their arguments developed is very valuable to monitor. Basically, two participants in this email list learned about the news in privacy, and became concerned, for many reasons, about the political recent change which is a matter of public significance. They started a private discussion over the internet which they chose as their mean of communication, and then invited more people that they already knew to the emails group so that they become able to read and be part of the discussion. The argument, then, developed from different sides, and certain quality standards were attached to its nature. Participants recognized that only by following such standards their participation will be welcomed by the rest of the group. Best arguments began to prevail after a while as they influenced the participants' opinions, and constructed a base where they used to build up their own arguments about the topic. Later on, several agreements appeared in the discussion, and a sort of consensus on some theoretical parts was achieved even though it was not expressed explicitly. At this point, the discussion reached an essential crossroad where it decided to move further towards a practical direction; a course where participants in the diaspora can have a real

influence over the new government call for peace. Unexpectedly, participants halted their contributions to the argument, and their accomplishment remained both theoretical and private. In other words, though they have been very successful in building up an acceptable public opinion among themselves, they neither could publicize such opinion, nor were they able to translate it into national realistic actions.

## **4.2 Interviews Findings and Analysis**

In the second part of this chapter, I will attempt to analyze the factors that negatively affected the continuation and development of the participants' discussion into a set of practical actions in relation to the state. I will basically do my analysis based on the interviews that I have conducted in London, Gaza, and Stockholm.

### **4.2.1 Participation Indicators**

The Palestinian citizens I interviewed both in London and Stockholm were very knowledgeable about the political situation in the OPT; some of them have been actually living there prior to their travel abroad. They showed a great concern about the diverse developments in the OPT which mostly materialized in their tendency to follow the relevant news in a regular basis. I asked them about their *different sorts of participation* in relation to Palestine, and I found out that all of them have been taking part in various activities directed towards improving the situation back home; these are some of the answers that I received:

- 1. We used to do some activities to promote peace and justice in Palestine to the university students, and I always got involved in conversations, dialogues...etc.*
- 2. I focused on occupation and colonization, and also for development when I sent delegations down to Palestine with the aim of establishing solidarity relationships between the Swedish factions, mostly the left and the Palestinian factions back home.*
- 3. The framework we are focusing on in our university, is a Palestinian solidarity group, what we do in the campus is students activities, lectures, symposiums, present movies, host discussions. We also worked in an issue related to the academic scope, academic cooperation financed by the European Union, we succeeded to gain two academic projects with both Berzeit and Al Najah Universities.*
- 4. The line I am focusing on created a constructive solution for this political chaos that we are living in, I assembled those organizations that support Palestine in a platform for boycotting Israel and we have 14 organizations in this network now.*

## 4.2.2 Reasons for Participation

In addition to their full concern about the Palestinian issues, the informants also mentioned some reasons in different contexts behind their tendency to take part in the development process inside the OPT, and I think that these reasons relate to three major facts:

The *first fact* is about the informants' dissatisfaction with the way Palestinians in the OPT manage their country as well as face the Israeli occupation. The following statements illustrate further this point:

1. *My responsibility as a human being and as a concerned person of Palestinian origin is try to explain the right for the Palestinians for end of occupation and for freedom and equality and at the same time try to explain to the Palestinian inside that following certain ways is damaging his own right.*
2. *I think the way we handled the struggle right from the beginning has damaged our image, made people not believe in us as human beings, now we need to change, we need a new image, a responsible image, a new people who are connected top the outside world, who respect the right of the other whoever he is*
3. *The way we judge the Palestinian authority whether it is functioning well or not should not only be by the amount of media, the amount of propaganda that is given to the outside word, to Europe, or to the states. No, we should be also judged by the amounts of efforts that are putting into this educational system, to health system, civil system...because after all you should take care of the welfare of the Palestinians.*
4. *I would like to see reform taking place infavour of Palestinian people who deserve to live in peace and reserved dignity*
5. *You have to create an image that you deserve life, not to wait until you are given life and then you think about it. We have to take things in our hands; we cannot just wait until Israel completely withdraws.*

And the *second fact* is about the informants' different environment which seems to have a remarkable influence over their practices Here are some of the quotations in which they analyze their inclination towards participation:

1. *Palestinians usually who live, in my opinion, in England or anywhere else outside of Palestine, they usually get nostalgic about their home, their families, and suddenly they discover probably desire in them to help, and willingness to do anything in order to be part. They want to integrate with the community because they are far away from it, however, sometimes you feel that Palestinians who are inside, they actually look for Palestinians outside as people who are escaping from the reality, or in a way, I think they look to Palestinian expatriates in many ways unfair.*

2. *Well, living in a democracy such as the UK I've always felt I speak my mind. My views may not be welcomed all the time but at least heard and respected and that is what counts to me*
3. *I noticed that when I go down to Jordan people there do not speak about politics; it seems that they do not have an ability to change anything so they do not talk about it. But for Palestinians here, there is more freedom that they discuss the issue, and they even do it together with Swedish persons or foreigners. So, you begin here to present your point of view.*

The *third fact*, however; relates to the construction of their identity:

1. *Palestine is a very important identity for me, because here you are not fully Swedish, I used to say I am Swedish Palestinian, and I am very proud of my origin.*
2. *I think being Palestinian basically is feeling the situation, not necessarily suffering but have feeling for your people, hoping for them, having ambitions not only sticking to the past but thinking in the future.*

### **4.2.3 Participation Barriers**

The informants explained that although they have been succeeding in contributing to development process inside the OPT (whether through direct or indirect support), there are still several factors that either discouraged or hindered their participation plans most of the time. They initially gave me general grounds that play a negative role when it comes to the participation of the Palestinian communities abroad in general. These reasons can be divided into two important categories:

The *first category* relates to the relationship between the Palestinian communities abroad and the Palestinian leadership, they indicated in a way or another that there is an existing gap between both parties, which has a noticeable influence over the Palestinian communities' efforts directed towards improving the function of the PA institutions inside the OPT. The following quotations summarize the most distinguished explanations regarding this issue:

1. *Some of those who are in the diaspora are still believing in the full implementation of the right of return, and refusing to admit certain facts and contemporary changes...if you look back politically speaking for the last ten years, the Palestinian authority's stand for the right of return has been clear which is there will not be a full implementation of the right of return, they said it in a way or another whether they declared it clearly or not...there are two articles of late president Arafat one in 'Haaretz' and one in 'Newsweek' and he said it clearly.*

2. *Our leadership decides to do something without an agreement of the Palestinian community within the Palestinian territory and definitely with no count even of the Palestinian communities' opinion in the diaspora.*
3. *PLO when first started, it started by the Palestinians outside for the Palestinians inside, but now, it focuses its efforts on the Palestinians inside.*
4. *We have never been asked to participate in the election which is a direct political participation, so this is the channel which is lacked.*

The *second category* is also connected to the first one, and it may be considered as an obvious result for the points mentioned above. It relates more to the psychological reasons that affect the Palestinian communities' level of participation. The informants discussed the psychological factor extensively in different occasions, and the following statements give examples of their explanation:

1. *I think they (Palestinian communities abroad) must feel that their contributions are welcomed by the Palestinians inside, the reality is unfortunately very different, because Palestinians outside - their views and their opinions does not seem to matter to the Palestinians inside.*
2. *You need to make the community feel not neglected and responsible as well, not just to lay back and wait and be just the receiver.*

#### **4.2.4 Political Communication Channels**

It was obvious for me to recognize that the real problem lies mainly in the first category mentioned above, and that the lack and inefficiency of the participation channels (especially the official ones) is the central dilemma that countered the Palestinian communities' efforts towards the development process in the OPT. Therefore, I decided to focus extensively on the Palestinian responsible communication channels so that to highlight all possible obstacles to the participation process in details. I considered the *Palestinian Association* (in both countries), *the Palestinian Embassies* (in both countries), *the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* in Gaza City, and *the main Palestinian State Media Organizations* in Gaza City.

##### **I. Palestinian Association (PAS)**

The informants both in London and Stockholm had almost similar evaluations regarding the function of the *Palestinian Association* in both countries. Nevertheless, the one in Stockholm had been criticized for its law performance much more than its counterpart in London. All of the

informants were or still in connection with the PAS, and that gave credibility to their assessment. I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that I distinguished between the assessment of the PAS in London and Stockholm for accuracy reasons, however; many of the proposed recommendations spelled out by my informants are possible to apply to the PAS in both capitals.

#### **a) Palestinian Association - London**

The informants in London considered the *Palestinian Association* as relatively inactive; they admitted that it was a success to establish it at the first place, and that it has succeeded in implementing different projects especially in connection with publicizing the Palestinian issue. Yet; they thought that PAS could have been much more productive if considering the following points:

- 1. In my view, first of all, the association did not succeed in bringing linkage between the Palestinian communities, yes, they have held few social events but it was preempted because it showed complete connection with the political situation over there. And Palestinians in the diaspora particularly those who have been here for a long time like me, we do not care about this political connection, I don't care about the political connection, but I care most about the people over there.*
- 2. I always thought that it can be better; it just needs some more commitment, organization and harder work from those who run it, as well as members.*
- 3. Those who are in charge are busy with their own businesses, with their own prosperity, with their own things, and this is where you need someone on the retirement basis who wants this kind of work, and willing to give time and effort.*
- 4. I think that politics hijacks lots of issues which the Palestinian Association here should be caring about.*
- 5. PAS should 'focus on the Palestinians more than focusing on the foreigners'.*
- 6. PAS should 'Find out ways (and implement them) to motivate more Palestinians as well as friends of Palestine to be members and contribute their efforts to support the cause of Palestine in a more creative, organized and co-ordinate methods'.*
- 7. PAS should 'have tolerant programmes and campaigns to educate the British community about the Palestinian cause and get their support'.*
- 8. PAS should 'open the door widely and positively for anyone including Israelis, Zionists, Jewish and whomever to come and talk and dialogue with keeping a very high level of tolerance, understanding and civilization regardless to the other's attitude as long as they do not go beyond their legal boundaries according to the British law'.*

9. *PAS should 'be more creative in looking for solutions and looking for methods' (regarding achieving reform in the OPT).*

Those points were summarized that way in order to reflect the perspectives of the PC in London vis-à-vis the appropriate function and ideology of the PAS, and such evaluation highlights the major dilemmas that influence their participation as long as the PC relationship with PAS is concerned. The points also suggest that certain procedures should be taken by the PAS in London in order to increase and strengthen the level of participation among the PC in London.

## **b) Palestinian Association - Stockholm**

The informants in Stockholm had a rather negative opinion regarding the *Palestinian Association* there; they depreciated the role it practices in regard with both the Palestinian issue and the PC in Sweden. I noticed also that their expectations towards the function of the PAS were very high due to the big number of the PC in Sweden which includes lots of asylum seekers. I was able to distinguish several reasons as well as improvement suggestions related to the performance of the PAS in Stockholm. The following statements expressed by my informants represent the most influential points of their observations:

1. *I had much relation with the PAS than the embassy, but as I told you, their goal is social more than anything else.*
2. *PAS always have a negative reaction (regarding proposed activities or initiatives submitted by Palestinians).*
3. *The board of directors has been for so many years, a dictatorship system.*
4. *Even the Palestinian Associations between themselves in Stockholm and Uppsala, they do not coordinate with each other.*
5. *The period when there were lots of demonstrations taking place regularly at the beginning of Intifada after the invasion of the West Bank 2002...they were only participants in addition to leftist groups and human rights groups in Sweden, and the international solidarity movement as well.*
6. *Because most of its members are those older people, their family life takes the biggest portion of their time...There is also no social attempt to include those new comers to the country.*
7. *They may respond to an invitation by a Swedish faction, but otherwise, they have no initiatives.*

8. *They can definitely play a big role, if they succeed in activating those people (PC) whom 80% of them live on the Social welfare*
9. *PAS should start contact with the immigration department, any Palestinian arrive from any point in the earth as a refugee, try to contact him or her...It is not hard to get information about any Palestinian here...through the telephone catalogue, the official sides, the immigration department or the internet, you can know all the names, telephone numbers and where do they live.*

I had reached two significant conclusions after I analyzed the interviews texts; the *first one* is that the whole structure of the PAS in Stockholm is unproductive except for some limited social activities, while *the second* is that the PC in Sweden is in bigger need for an active PAS than the PC in London. The major problem with the PAS in Stockholm is that, it somehow isolated itself from being an association for the PC younger generation in Sweden, while at the same time it played a negative role by discouraging several initiatives made by some PC members towards productive forms of participation.

## **II. Palestinian Embassy**

The next stage of analyzing the ‘communication channels’ was focused on the relationship between the Palestinian communities abroad and the Palestinian official representative bodies. For this purpose, I asked both my informants from the PC and the *Palestinian Embassies* in both countries to define their relationship with each other, and evaluate the role of each other as well.

The informants in London and Stockholm clarified that their relationship with the embassy is superficial, which is only for practical matters such as if they need to issue a passport or certify a particular document. Although they stated that the embassy should be responsible for contacting and activating the Palestinian communities abroad, I realized that some members of the PCs may refuse to have more than a practical contact with their embassies for two reasons; *first*, because they are not strong believers in the PA, and *second*; because they can possibly be asylum seekers who complained about the PA in their asylum application, and thus it is against their case to start a contact with the embassy.

Otherwise, the informants in both countries evaluated the role of the embassy in relation to them as well as the Palestinian cause as being passive and extremely limited. The *following quotations are examples of their justifications*:

1. *I think as a Palestinian, unless you try to reach out them, they won't reach out you, I can't remember that the embassy approached me and said listen, we are representing you here, we want your contact details!*
2. *There is no agenda, there is no schedule ... there is no work for the diaspora... they do not see the massive support the question of Palestine has today... If they just learn 10% or 5% from the Zionist strategy, the position of the Swedish government would not be like this today... they would not boycott Hamas today and so on.*
3. *I talked with the PLO office but they had no positive response (regarding an initiative for an educational project supporting the OPT)... You get the feeling that the Palestinian embassy here is only about titles. They have nothing practical to work for. If you take out the stamps from them, nobody visits their office.*
4. *The new ambassador, I did not see or meet him, I saw an interview with him in the newspaper, I wondered because he was talking about the importance of the economic relations with Israel, while we are working here on the opposite line, which is to boycott Israel... I do not have so much hope for him, because I think he is somehow mirroring the Palestinian leadership.*
5. *In my opinion, the role of the embassy should work in many levels, one of them of course to connect with British foreign office, and on the other hand try to connect the diasporas with back home.*
6. *The embassy should 'try to draw the picture of solidarity work... have a clear political line, what do we want from Israel, and how should we achieve it. Ok, there is a peace process, and then what? Should we wait? Or should we act? How can we act?'*
7. *The embassy should create 'a pool for Palestinian intellectuals or efficiencies, as well as the Palestinian initiative to both organize their work and encourage them'.*
8. *The official institutions are supposed to create awareness in the PC especially for those who are afraid to participate.*
9. *The embassy should 'try to constitute a basis on which they can negotiate with the Swedish people, they should speak in the name of thousands of Palestinians in Stockholm, in the name of other organizations that support Palestinians... tries to support the organizations attempting to assist Palestinians'.*

In fact, it was unexpected to realize the big gap existing between the PCs abroad and their embassies. Unlike their evaluation of *the Palestinian Association*, their comments about both embassies were not positive at all. The relationship between the PCs and the Palestinian embassies actually represents the relationship between the PCs and the Palestinian leadership, and as I presented earlier, there has been already, to some extent, an existing gap between both parties pertaining to the conflict of ideologies and lack of representation. It is quite realistic to expect, in this case, that the embassies should try to cover up the first gap instead of creating

another passive image about the Palestinian leadership abroad. Furthermore, the previous evaluation reflects that the Palestinian embassies stay much far behind being a facilitator or a communication channel through which the PCs abroad can transfer their initiatives into useful development actions.

### **a) Embassies' Standpoint**

The embassy in London over emphasized that the Palestinian community is highly educated, high powered, which includes businessmen, university professors, and students '*a kind of community that is cultured and politically conscious*'. On the other hand, the embassy in Stockholm stressed the notion that some of the PC in Sweden has been in the country for a long time; the first group came after the second world war as they were seeking knowledge and education, while most of the second group turned up in Sweden before 1967 as the state was in a big need for man-labour. The third group, however; came to Europe in general in the aftermath of the Lebanon war in 1982.

During my analysis to the interviews texts, I found out that there are basically **three key stages** to consider in examining the relationship between the embassies and the PCs abroad:

The **first stage** is about the previous achievements the *Palestinian embassies* and the *PLO* were able to complete in relation with the PCs abroad, which relatively played a significant role in maintaining and strengthening the Palestinian identity in the Past. The following quotations provide examples for some of those vital accomplishments:

- 1. It was the role of the political parties that existed in the PLO such as Fateh group or Al Jabha, the interest was to get more people or more supporters to the ideology, so, they went out first to all these groups and they kept informing them of what is going on, this was done through these resistance movements not through the office... Why do they adhere to these groups?, because these groups where very active, they tried to sell their own ideology to these young people who when they came here already...they had at least back home adhered emotionally if not practically to these groups, so all that they needed here is to collect them.*
- 2. On the other hand, we have programs as Palestinians, at least within the PLO, we used to have organizations and groups that was only working for education, I was member in one of them, and used to send people to study abroad with conditions that after he/she finishes, he/she has to pay back what we spent on him, and that was in two forms; either that he adopts another student and send him to learn, or else, if he is back, out of his salary after the first or second year of work, he pays back a minimal sum of money to*

*participate in sending another person. It was about five to six hundreds students yearly having scholarships.*

- 3. We have organized after certain time what we call, Al Rawabet, that we can group these Palestinians, into societies and associations, where they can look for their common interest let us say...It was an initiative from us as an office. Later on, this spread elsewhere; they began also to make the same kind of association elsewhere in Europe. They were not political... so they get to know one another, have common information and knowledge about what is going on. There are associations as such in most big cities particularly I see Stockholm, Malmo, Goterborg. Helsingborg and they function as such.*
- 4. PLO was namely Palestine Information Office, our work and business here was to disseminate the information we used to receive, our main task is to receive the information, publish it and distribute it in town, distribute it to the political parties, distribute it to the members of parliament, to people, to activists, and to organizations, ...Our office here, we used to have a bulletin, I used to publish the news coming from our people plus comments on it.*

It is interesting to become aware of the PLO's role in relation with the PCs in the past, regardless the quantity of its previous achievements, the PLO was able to deliver under the worst political conditions, and it was successful to keep a variety of contributions else than the political line.

The ***second stage*** is about the current communication process between the *Palestinian embassies* and the *PLO* at one hand, and the PCs abroad on the other hand. This stage is largely characterized by several reasons that hinder the possibility of having a fruitful participation from the PCs abroad. I received those explanations regarding such obstacles, which I listed down in form of quotations:

- 1. As usual with the introduction of mobile phones, the internet, the email, they (PC) are getting in touch directly with their own people back home. So, the real work of the office vis-à-vis these people does not any more have the same function or necessity as it used to be before. They come to the office for practical reasons, such as they need a passport, or they need a confirmation of a paper that they need for trade or commerce or for selling a land or a house, and we issue papers.*
- 2. The Swedish authority does not permit that any embassy gets in touch with its own people if these people have asked for asylum.*
- 3. Because of the Oslo agreement, many people felt 'ok, the PLO now went to Palestine', now there is a government, now our need to struggle is no more as acute as it used to be before. Many people stopped being active adherers to these groups (such as PLO), they kept their affinities but on paper.*
- 4. They have a very negative opinion about the Palestinian authority, because most of them hoped for the issue of returning back home...but when this did not materialize, they did*

*not go against the Americans or the Israelis or against any other group, they went against the PA...The PLO had a better feeling from the people outside than the PA has now; because at that time the PLO was independent, we could fight against anybody...we did not get any permission from anybody to exist, we existed despite of the rest of the world, despite of the Arab world too.*

5. *They (Israeli occupation) make a lot of difficulty for these Palestinian to go back, The PA probably tried its maximum best in order to get at least these people back to have the right to stay, those people who have got the right (those Palestinians originated from the West Bank and Gaza, and registered at a certain time by the Israeli authorities that they are living or citizens in the West Bank and Gaza) can speak out, can be elected, or they can elect other people, but they have to be there, we do not have still the right in embassies abroad for those people to come during elections and elect their representatives.*
6. *Our interest is now more about stopping the wall and building the settlements. It is no any more about the Palestinians, about daily issues about what is happening on the ground. This unfortunately took much of our time and our information and our work than grouping the Palestinians abroad.*

The focus in those explanations was more or less on other issues than those mentioned by the PC informants; there was no emphasis on the factors of mismanagement, lack of agenda or lack of coordination that the PCs complained much about. However; I still think that all of the pre-mentioned factors are realistic ones, and they definitely helped in increasing the gap between the Palestinian leadership and the PCs abroad.

Two of those explanations, in fact, raise two controversial issues concerning the relationship between the Palestinian leadership and the PCs abroad. The *first one* relates to the obstacles that are put forward by foreign countries regarding the communication process between the *Palestinian embassies* and the PCs. If we realize the point that the embassy should not start any contact with Palestinian asylum-seekers, it means that another representative body should be responsible for doing this task, probably the *Palestinian Association*. The matter here is that a Palestinian refugee should be distinguished from other asylum-seekers. In case he/she sought asylum justified by the Israeli occupation (as it is the usual case), it indicates that he/she is still concerned about his/her original country, and that it is his/her 'right' to be connected with the Palestinian leadership so that to be able to deliver in the development process in the OPT. This point can be clearly perceived in the opinions of the PC informants regarding the role of the embassy; they had higher expectations from such an official representative body in relation to them, they wanted to be reached out, organized and encouraged by the embassy so that their development continues in the OPT.

The *second issue* to consider is that the Israeli occupation still plays an intensive role in dividing the Palestinian people into two parts; the first part stays inside the OPT, and they are obliged to face several sorts of aggression as well as the poor economic conditions, while the second part resides in the diaspora, and they are neither allowed to return to their original cities, nor are they permitted to take part in the simplest political rights, which is to be able to vote and get elected through their embassies.

The *third stage* in this context is about the future agenda of the *Palestinian embassies*, this stage actually represents a crucial shift in the current adopted policies, it is very much connected with the recent reform process that was undertaken by the *Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* in 2005, and resulted in the rotation and change of many Palestinian ambassadors abroad. It also represents a stage where the PA has recognized its insufficient and low performance, and attempted to improve its diplomatic infrastructure in order to connect with the PCs abroad. The following statements shed the light on the new approach expressed by the Palestinian embassy in London:

1. *One of the major tasks how you can bring all the community together under one slogan "help Palestine" rather than being factionalized, each helping its own faction, each setting its own perception and its own personal agenda...we should be one unity.*
2. *I am willing to incorporate more and more the students, which I think they are our future intellectual elites who would be involved in the process of bringing institutions back home.*
3. *Defining and clarifying the news coming from the Israeli Zionist's side, and influence the public opinion in Britain.*
4. *What we can do in terms of social development is the development of the economic situation... the economic situation takes an empirical role in social development...the unemployment, the lack of job opportunities is creating an unstable situation in West Bank and Gaza.*
5. *Our resources are very limited, we have eleven universities in the west bank and Gaza, but they are not enough, many students end up working , so, people like that, living in the diaspora, can contribute money for scholarship for education in the various areas.*

The previous points are, in fact, significant indicators which reveal the PA new perspective and spirit in regard with the PCs abroad, on the other hand; I noticed that there were two shortcomings concerning the vision of the embassy; *first*, the adopted agenda is not laid down

with consideration to the wishes of the PC, which means that the PC perspectives and requirements were not checked out by the PA in order to improve the function of its diplomatic mission, and *second*, the major emphasis was on the economic contribution of the PCs abroad to the OPT, which means again that the new agenda is not planned to function as a channel, where other forms of contributions are encouraged, considered, and transferred.

### **III. Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)**

The *Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* is considered a very significant and responsible actor in the political communication process between the PA and the PCs abroad. Basically, it was the official body that first took the reform initiative in regard with the Palestinian diplomatic mission, and proposed a new diplomatic law in 2005 that defines and organizes the relationship between the Palestinian embassies or foreign delegations at one hand, and the MOFA on the other hand.

#### **a) MOFA Position**

MOFA informants gave the following explanations concerning the existing relationship disturbance between the PA and the PCs abroad:

- 1. MOFA was only established in 2003, previously, the ministry worked under the name of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and it used to practice some of the tasks of the Palestinian foreign policy.*
- 2. The relationship between the ministry (MOFA) and the communities was controlled by the relation between the MOFA and the political department of the PLO...there was no clear divide in the responsibilities and power limits concerning both bodies, this confusion of responsibilities negatively affected the work of both sides...the victim was the collective diplomatic work, the national aims, including the relationship with the communities...it was the victim of the existing conflict, which still exists but now it is less sharp.*
- 3. My personal opinion is that the systems and frames of the PLO are old and requires renewal in its institutions in order to be possible for this big and important sector of Palestinians abroad to practice their roles normally.*
- 4. The relationship between the embassy and the communities was distorted; there was no clear strategy, plan, or program organizing the relation between both sides (professional opinion).*
- 5. The problem is that no channels or bridges were created for communication, this is the real problem. We know exactly where the real problem does lie, the real problem is that there was a low performance from some ambassadors or consuls, and the relationship between the embassy and the communities was a relationship of conflict... there was lots of protests that came from the Palestinian communities against some ambassadors, their*

*behavior and practices... I received a lot of these protests, and I looked through them, I can say in general that the relationship was bad.*

- 6. PCs are not ready to participate, the shortage of information, the less knowledge about their countries, the less coordination and contact with the embassies abroad makes these people have no material to participate, they are suffering a shortage of everything.*

The fact that the MOFA is a newly established body is important to consider in the previous statements, besides; it is also worthy to notice that the MOFA decided to be independent from the PLO in its new approach, which indicates that the Palestinian diplomatic work in connection with the PCs abroad will be, to a great extent, the responsibility of the PA.

In deed, I found it hopeful to perceive that the MOFA has obviously realized the present communication problem between the PA and the PCs in the diaspora. I also was able to conclude some positive initiatives as well as action plans that were taken by the ministry on this issue. The MOFA initiatives can be recognized through out the following statements:

- 1. We are about to enter a new state controlled by laws, systems, a perspective and an action plan, and this was absent in the past.*
- 2. The aim of this new plan is to reinforce the ties and relationships with the communities outside, create a network of relations with them, and make it possible for coordination with these communities in all their sectors and categories. This will be in order to get benefited from them, in order for them to practice their normal roles in serving their country and their issue, and of course to protect them and protect their welfares, and preserve their identity.*
- 3. Now, MOFA... has a different opinion and perspective regarding the function of the ministry...this perspective is based on a group of ideas, the basis for that was to prepare a law for the Palestinian diplomatic cord; this law was formulated, prepared, attested by the legislative council, the council of ministers, and the president, and it became valid now ...This law tackles the issue of the importance of relationship between the ministry and the communities in the daspora... This matter became for the first time an official thing, legal thing, and a part of the tasks of the ministry according to the law.*
- 4. According to the new law, MOFA will have a new framework; this new structure took into consideration the necessity of including a specialized sector for the communities...the ministry will be divided into six sectors. One of these sectors is specialized with the issue of the Palestinian diaspora.*
- 5. We refuse politicizing the Palestinian national work for the communities; we refuse that any mechanism for starting elections or activities, for instance, to be controlled by any factional logic. You know well that the diplomatic employee has no right to express factional viewpoints belong to him or her. The diplomatic employee represents the country programme, and seeks to achieve the aims of the country and the MOFA.*

According to the new diplomatic law, MOFA is responsible for supervising all of the Palestinian diplomatic missions politically, administratively and financially. Furthermore; it is accountable for reinforcing the relationship with the PCs abroad at one hand, and deepening the connection between the PCs and their people and homeland on the other hand. The diplomatic law also includes certain articles that hold the *Palestinian embassy* the responsibility of assisting and protecting the PCs abroad, in addition to other articles that provide for punishment procedures against those employees who are not committed to their mission. The law is considered a very distinguished development so far, as it would at least bring a sort of power to the PCs abroad. They will actually become able to scrutinize the work of both the MOFA and the Palestinian diplomatic missions in the diaspora, and they will be able to report any occurring mistakes as well, which will be handled according to the new law by the MOFA.

The MOFA has basically adopted an action plan in order to successfully apply its new approach; the following quotations represent the most significant points of this plan:

- 1. One of the most important tools which was achieved is the rotation of the Palestinian ambassadors outside, resigning those who have reached pension age, and putting forward a new Palestinian diplomatic system. Thus, a new group of ambassadors were employed, some of them are young, they have a new spirit, and they will contribute actively in returning the vitality of the Palestinian diplomatic system.*
- 2. The other issue is that the MOFA has an intention towards sending a delegation in the future from the ministry to meet with the Palestinian communities one by one, and listen to their problems and the conditions they live under.*
- 3. Starting an information bank or database...this is under processing right now, this issue will facilitate the way for the ministry to reach out and recognize the capacities and abilities of these communities, and help them serve the Palestinian issue...one of the tasks of the ambassador or consul is to establish a data base regarding all members of the Palestinian community.*
- 4. They (PCs) will be updated with all the laws and decisions and documents necessary for them, there will be cooperation on the higher levels....Palestinian outside will know the information offered by the ministry through its official website...Currently, we stopped activating the website of the ministry, in order to update and develop its information. Very soon it will be re-launched in a new look, and with a new size of information.*
- 5. There is a real intention to start a 'Complaint Box', not only that, but also an electronic mail will be specialized for receiving complaints and requests as well. Anybody who wants to enquire regarding any related issue, there will be an immediate response for such enquiry. This box will be placed in the embassy, or through a email connected directly with the ministry.*

6. *You will hear very soon about holding a conference for those in the diaspora, and the invitations will be forwarded to those who are well-known in the Palestinian communities to attend this conference. On the other hand, those who want to invest in Palestine, it will be facilitated for them, and a suitable environment will be created as well to keep up security and trust.*
7. *A department in each embassy will be in charge of media and communication and the information available, people will go there and they will find what they need...because nowadays the information available about Palestine in the embassies abroad, for my personal point of view, is not satisfactory, but in the future, with this development, the material will be sent from here, information will be provided to embassies, and such subdivision will be in charge of this communication process.*

There is no doubt that the pre-mentioned action plan is considered a very essential step towards revitalizing the Palestinian diplomatic system, I noticed that many of the reform points mentioned above were actually highlighted beforehand by different PC members. However; there are *some limitations* that can definitely disturb the function of the MOFA in relation to the PCs abroad if not considered. The following list does not provide particular suggestions to the work of the MOFA, yet, it highlights the fact that a vital political communication (appropriate for a public sphere level) requires higher standards and outlooks than those proposed by the ministry. The MOFA, for instance, is expected to:

1. Take into consideration that the PAS does not necessarily represent the members of the PC in the diaspora, add to that the fact that they were highly criticized for law performance by the PC informants.
2. Publicize the new diplomatic law so as to ensure that the PC members are aware of its content.
3. State the initiatives that must be taken by the embassy in regard with the PC members outside, how should they be encouraged to participate? What are the suggested limits of their participation?
4. Consider, like any other Palestinian official body, the encouragement of other forms of participation else than the economic one (that may include a political participation for example).

5. To build up its actual function plan based on previous or recent researches conducted over the PCs abroad.
6. Consider the necessity of professional coordination especially when it comes to the role of communication and media.

#### **IV. State Media (SM)**

The final stage of analyzing the communication channels between the PCs in the diaspora, and the Palestinian leadership was focused on media and communication performance within the PA and PLO structures. The PC informants as well as the *Palestinian embassies* both in London and Stockholm had commented on *the performance of the media sector* - belonging to the Palestinian leadership - in relation to the Palestinian diaspora. The following statements present their various perspectives:

1. *We lack again specialized websites, if you look at the kind of websites that we have, they are mostly focusing on the political situation, but you do not have for example a website which is called "Science" for example, that would encourage Palestinians who are involved in scientific fields rather than political and diplomatic ones...They (Palestinians) do not have a forum where they can publish their researches.*
2. *I think one thing about information in general is that most people here seem to know about the political aspect more than any other aspect of the life back in the territories...whatever aspect you want to know about, it will always be quoted with a political color. If you want to know about the economic or educational situation, you will always read about politics while you read about the economic situation. You will always find justifications.*
3. *Generally, the news follows the action, where is the action now, you can hear news about the Palestinians in Jordan or in Lebanon or in Kuwait when there is something happening there.*
4. *I think the core point here is missing which is the independence of media... and once the media channel or website is owned by a political faction, this means that these media channels are sponsored, and which means that you only broadcast information which the channel owner would believe that this kind of information will recruit more people to support their faction.*
5. *Our media is not enough basically to reflect the problems that we are facing.*
6. *Palestinian Media seems to focus on Palestinians living within the OPT ignoring or not giving enough attention to millions of Palestinians living in the diaspora, especially those living in refugee camps without the basic civil or human right in the neighboring countries.*

7. *Almost there is no coverage for the communities in the diaspora. Sometimes, you may cross a tiny piece of news in the internal pages. I think also, to a great extent, the local press is busy with covering local events.*
8. *There are no specific programs related to the Palestinian community in Sweden, or in Norway or elsewhere.*
9. *The PCs abroad are usually covered, whether by home or Arab press, through general events, for example, the last issue about the caricature against the prophet, the Islamic community as well as the PC was covered alongside such issue...but there is no specific programs related to the Palestinian community in Sweden, or in Norway or elsewhere.*
10. *It is a very good idea if there is a database or news letter that can keep people (PCs members) connected.*
11. *We should have a specialized, I would say, newspapers like the 'Jewish Cronicle', they cover back home news and outside news.*
12. *We should have an official television, and any kind of an official position should be set through that TV to represent the government and represent the Palestinians.*
13. *We don't have organized tagline official...today I had to analyze my own perception; I don't have instructed tagline what to say on TV.*

A variety of obstacles to the process of representation and integration by the state to the PCs abroad is, in deed, brought up throughout the pre-mentioned statements. Such comments are not comprehensive in nature, however; they refer to an outstanding pillar in the political communication process. Although PC informants and both Palestinian embassies have explained that they do not usually follow the Palestinian official media, they noticeably criticized the performance of the state media (SM) in relation to them. The SM was criticized most not for its authoritarian practices as it is usually the case in many peripheral nations, SM was, otherwise; condemned for not taking part in the political communication course, and for creating a political media condition that does not provide raw materials for development discussions. In other words, the SM seem not to have any plans for motivating a valuable deliberation among Palestinians in the diaspora, while it seems that the state, by adopting its current practices, has also failed in providing an 'engineered press' that serves its long-term national goals.

#### **a) Palestinian Ministry of Information (MNFO)**

The *Palestinian Ministry of Information* has been established in 1994. Although it could be understood as an official body aiming at controlling the Palestinian media publications, MNFO

has proved to have a completely different role. Its responsibilities varied from providing services for journalists, facilitating their jobs, offering them a sort of spiritual support, issuing journalistic cards...etc. On the other hand, it had no particular stands towards engineering the press or controlling the information inside the OPT.

Concerning MNFO responsibility towards the PCs abroad, my informant had pointed out that there is a great absence in covering the Palestinian diaspora that is not justified, and that the PA institutions is responsible to activate the Palestinian public opinion outside. He also referred to the notion that the PCs abroad are almost isolated from the OPT due to the lack of media representation.

MNFO has provided an extensive account regarding the political communication process between the PA and the PCs outside, such justifications and wishes as well, in my opinion, provide a significant material to compare with the opinions and requirements of the PCs abroad. The following statements reflect on the grounds behind the current mistakes committed by the SM:

1. *The Palestinian concern focusing on the conflict status between us and the Israelis, made the Palestinian media much more focused on the political status than the social and cultural issues. Thus, you can say that the cultural and economic sides did not occupy a simple portion from the Palestinian Media coverage.*
2. *Due to the absence of capital and investment in media, it becomes belonging to other sides which controlled the content of the media message...The absence of investment stands as an obstacle for developing a Palestinian independent media.*
3. *One hundred years of occupation, and all our writers and intellectuals only focusing on the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict.*
4. *The relationship (between MNFO and other official media institutes) is weak...MNFO is supposed to be responsible for the TV or the State Information Service, but the relationship is only in the frame of coordination...there is state of competition sometimes, and this is a mistake in the structure itself.*
5. *MNFO should be the official speaker for the government, documenting all files, following up all the news and policies, identifying media policies as well.*
6. *MNFO must have the role of organizing the relationship between the Medias owned by the PA or the State, so that the Media messages become unified and not distracted policy.*

As I have observed, those accounts provide explanations for some of the points mentioned by the PCs members and ambassadors. One of the most important issues that should be underlined here, is that the structure of the Palestinian official media is not characterized by a concentration of ownership or capitalism, for that reason, it is not appropriate to consider or apply the theory of communication action or the critical theory in this context. Apparently, there is a certain level of awareness around the problems in management and communication strategies within the PA structures, however; this awareness is limited in scope, and there are no steps or perspectives adopted to reform the current status quo.

There are definitely other accounts to be considered in this topic, which are connected with the rest of the official media institutes inside the OPT. Such organizations, as it was mentioned earlier, are not supervised by MNFO, therefore; they have their own different independent agenda and perspective in regard with this area.

#### **b) State Information Service (SIS)**

The State Information Service is a governmental institution that belongs to the PA; it provides citizens, decision-makers, researchers and institutions with several sorts of information, statistics, news and polls about Palestine.

I have collected *three imperative remarks* that serve as a basis for the coming explanations regarding the communication status between the SIS and the PCs abroad. These comments were expressed during the interview, and they are summarized below:

1. Palestinian official media is not efficient as it is concerned only about the political issues, and does not separate political, cultural and social issues from each other.
2. PA is not organized when it comes to integrating the Palestinian people all over the world into one body.
3. SIS had tried to cover the PCs abroad, the experience was limited but still there is inclination towards covering them.

In my opinion, the previous notions reflect again the state of awareness over the communication problem between the PA official media and PCs and embassies abroad. In addition, the fact that

the SIS is ready to deal with the coverage of the PCs outside depends on receiving the news material from the PCs abroad.

The SIS informant has provided the following explanations about the SIS relation with the PCs abroad:

- 1. Embassies, honestly, they cover only for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and this is wrong... they do not provide us with information or news. Since SIS is an official media institute, they supposed to supply it with information...they do not interact in an accurate way.*
- 2. The authority is not effective enough to ask any ambassador to prepare a daily informative report that should be sent to Wafa, SIS or the T.V....this should be a condition and not a matter of choice... The government should also provide the embassy with information, and that does not happen.*
- 3. The problem is here, the Palestinian mentality here, what is the use of such piece of news if they (PCs), for example, arranged a festival in New York or Texas. There is something wrong in the mentality here, and also in the mentality outside...they do not accept each other.*

The statements above refer that the communication difficulty between SIS and PCs outside is connected with the performance of other PA political and official media organizations. This, in deed, is a reasonable account which questions the recent initiatives and visions of MOFA that I have presented and discussed earlier. The other significant matter in the informant's comments refers to another existing gab between the PCs abroad and Palestinians in the OPT, which is a main topic to be considered in the political communication analysis of this issue.

### **c) Wafa News Agency**

Wafa is the major national news agency in Palestine; it basically represents the viewpoints of the Palestinian leadership. There are several *interesting facts* connected with the work and development of this agency; the following statements, expressed by my informant, summarize the most relevant information to our subject:

- 1. It serves the official side represented by the PA and PLO, and being located in the country, it reflects on the wishes and expectations of the Palestinian people whether inside or outside.*
- 2. It covered the PLO news abroad...it came here with the establishment of the PA in 1994; it existed before in Beirut, Tunisia...etc...Now, with the establishment of the PA... the situation became different, it started to cover the official news, and the news of the*

*Palestinian people through the work of the Palestinian institutes, whether ministries or various institutes.*

- 3. The philosophy of this agency is a philosophy that is adopted from the philosophy of the PA and the PLO, it has general directions which are the directions of the PA and the PLO...a major shift in the policy of the agency occurred when it did not limit itself to the official news, the PLO, PA or institutes, but also the news of the Palestinian opposition.*
- 4. As a journalist, Wafa is the main source and the most important for news in Palestine... it is a main source for news and information for journalists on the local, Arabic and international levels.*
- 5. There is something important that the PLO offices or embassies of Palestine abroad works as correspondents to Wafa, even ambassadors themselves are correspondents to Wafa in the outside.*
- 6. It is the responsibility (concerning communication with the Palestinian diaspora) of the PA, including embassies of course, on the other side, which is more central; it is the responsibility of the MOFA and Wafa as well.*

In the pre-listed statements, there are quiet *lots of reasons* that hold Wafa a main responsibility in the communication process between the PCs outside and the Palestinian leadership. *First of all*, it represents the official side of both PLO and PA, *secondly*, it has a national direction and not a capital one, *thirdly*, it is considered a main source of information for other media institutes in Palestine, and *fourthly*, its official status facilitates its function and coordination with the PA embassies abroad. It is important to consider also, that Wafa has a noticeable influence and impact on the coverage of other media institutes in the OPT, which adds a distinguished advantage to its role and function in the communication process.

In relation to the linkage with the PCs outside, I observed that Wafa position was very much connected with the status of the PLO, which means that the weak structure of the PLO has definitely affected the criteria of coverage in the news agency. The relationship between the standpoints of official media and the PCs abroad seems to be problematic; at one hand, the agency has no objections towards covering the PCs news in case there are news materials to be considered, on the other hand, PCs think that it is the responsibility of the PA and PLO information and news sectors, to cover their lives and represent them as a part of the Palestinian people. PCs believe that there is a great negligence to them in the official daily coverage, which basically close up the channels on which they may employ for transferring their knowledge, viewpoints and support into the OPT. In addition, it seems that the PCs public opinion will never

reach out the OPT as long as the current media policy of the Palestinian leadership is not modified.

The following statements provide some explanations as well as initiatives concerning the difficulty of having an adequate media representation of the PCs abroad:

1. *It (the coverage) depends on the level of activity of the community, the strength of the political and media leadership there, and the embassy as well.*
2. *In many cases, we call many of the communities there; this is related to particular occasions or events, so we ask them for example about their contributions, opinions, and information.*
3. *We do not have a data base...this is maybe the job of the SIS to have an information bank; it is not the task of the agency.*
4. *The general focus is on the Palestinian people, but there is a special focus on the political and security situation, because we live under such circumstances, I cannot ignore a situation that I live in; this includes the Israeli violations, the PA correspondences and efforts, the peace process and the quartet committee.*
5. *The SIS is not a media organization...it has attempted to get involved in the media, however; it is supposed to be a source or a bank for information...As long as there is a news agency, let the news agency take care of the media side, and let the SIS be the source of information for this agency...instead of distracting their efforts.*
6. *There is a development in the last two three years...in the volume of the economic and culture news.*
7. *We started a new corner called comments and opinions, this was established in 2005, political analysts and famous writers can publish their essays, and it is possible to any other citizen, within the limits of objectivity, and journalistic and professional customs to reply, and such reply will be published.*

There are *two basic comments* that I would like to highlight in this context: *First*, there is an evident conflict of responsibilities between Wafa and SIS, which obviously plays a negative role in having a genuine communication order with the PCs outside. *Second*; the misunderstanding of news values in the official media hinders the coverage process of the PCs abroad. Both Wafa and SIS seem to be following the development journalism theory, which basically handles national issues but not focusing on development, solutions or civic reporting. This appeared clearly in their statements and practices in regard with the coverage of the Palestinian citizens in general; the choice of news materials, the priority in news coverage, the definition of national media, and the sort of news they expected to receive from the Palestinian diapora indicate they both belong

to a similar journalism school. The question here is, does their 'school of journalism' fit into the public sphere model or the notion of deliberative democracy?

#### **4.2.5 Final Comments**

The various views stated by the PCs informants, embassies, and official media institutes, regarding SM communication with the PCs abroad, reflected on a plenty of diverse obstacles that still obstruct the integration and representation process of the Palestinian diaspora by the Palestinian leadership. These obstacles are most resulted by the lack of coordination between the PA political and media institutes, the distraction and incoherence of tasks distribution among the PA official media organizations, and the lack of policy-making and professional standards in news coverage. Although there was only few proposed initiatives to reform the media competence within the PA structures, the informants were able to define several factors that are reasonably connected with the problem.

Unlike the condition of Palestinian official media, the PA political system had already took practical steps to reform their mechanism of communication with the PCs abroad. The problem was analyzed and understood to a great extent by the PA relevant political departments, nonetheless; the presentation of their solutions and agendas did not completely match the standpoints of PCs members outside, neither did it include else PA institutes that are considered 'major actors' in the political communication course. Lack of coordination and scientific research turned out the political adopted strategy incomplete and most probably inefficient on the practical level.

The PCs standpoints, on the other hand, represented a great willingness for participation as well as an account for their integration and representation requirements within the structure of the Palestinian leadership. I was able to distinguish several gabs between the PCs on one side, and the Palestinian official institutions responsible for the political communication process on the other side. These gabs stand for the main obstacles that disconnect the Palestinian diaspora from the Palestinian leadership. Although several actors have been participating in creating those gabs, all the informants agreed that it is the responsibility of the PA to find and apply solutions for the current fragile situation.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Through following the extensive analytical account in the previous chapter, it becomes possible to draw several conclusions in regard with the subject of this research. The results found provide a considerable theoretical realization as well as imperative and informative materials for all participating sectors in this work.

The following points stand for the *final answers of the research questions* that I have proposed earlier in my thesis; the last two points give more information regarding the answer of the second research question:

1. The possibility of creating a successful public sphere among the Palestinian communities abroad does exist within a variety of particular conditions; these conditions mainly relate to the central pillars of the public sphere that were initially discussed in the theoretical part of this research.
2. Though there is a potentiality to create a public sphere among the Palestinian communities abroad, a functional development or continuation of such a sphere may not be possible at the present time.
3. The current political communication approach of the Palestinian leadership affects negatively the rise and development of the Palestinian public sphere in the diaspora, and it is considered, in addition to the existing gaps between the PCs abroad and the PA, as a major obstacle that halts providing the functioning status of the developed public sphere outside Palestine.
4. The present political communication approach of the Palestinian leadership towards the PCs abroad is more complex as it may look like, in general; it is characterized by weakness, indiscipline, and a number of serious gaps between both parties.
5. The available political communication approach of the Palestinian leadership towards the PCs abroad stands presently at a cross road; several initiatives and action plans have been adopted by the PA to reform the current status, nonetheless; the level of coordination and cooperation among the PA institutes, the tendency towards reforming policies especially in the PA official media organizations, and the willingness towards considering the PCs

standpoints in the new measures, play a central role in determining the potentiality and effectiveness of the recent plans and perspectives pertaining to the reformation process.

The previous answers indicate that it is possible to create a substantial public sphere among the Palestinian communities abroad (under some particular conditions), and that the existence of a certain Palestinian community in the diaspora does not impede the formation process of such a sphere. There are several motivations as well as specific factors that can definitely encourage and facilitate building up a public sphere of higher standards among them. However; the difficulty lies in the continuation and effectiveness of the formed public sphere on the practical level. The present communication status, especially between the PA and the PCs abroad, neither encourages the rise and continuation of the public sphere, nor does it allow its development into a considerable power. Therefore, it may be very possible that other formed public spheres in the Palestinian diaspora will not succeed to survive and fulfill their objectives at the present time for the pre-mentioned reasons.

The results above have an apparent direction towards achieving reform in the PA political communication strategy towards the PCs abroad. The reform process, as it was briefly highlighted in the previous chapter, is a possible change at the present time with a set of initiatives adopted and applied recently by the PA political departments vis-à-vis this matter. If the suggested improvements succeed in generating the appropriate environment, there will be a possibility that Palestinian public spheres in the diaspora will be able to function at their best capacities, furthermore; the possibility to create more public spheres will consequently increase.

The general characteristics of the political communication network between the Palestinian leadership and the PCs abroad have become more obvious and understandable through out this research. The distinct standpoints and attitudes expressed regarding this topic helped providing an initial multi-sided overview about the current situation, and this outline is absolutely worth consideration in any further research tackling the pre-mentioned political communication course.

It is quite important to point out that the research conclusions can be usefully followed up by conducting a specialized study on the part pertaining to the Palestinian media practices (whether governmental or not) in relation to the Palestinian citizens in general. The concentration should be on the role the Palestinian media and journalism play in stimulating a genuine public opinion directed towards development issues in the OPT. Besides, it will be a quite valuable work to

figure out the sort of democracy Palestinian media in general attempts to consolidate through out its current practices, and the possibilities and constraints that such media puts forward for the development of any potential public sphere inside the OPT.

As I have focused my efforts to examine the characteristics of the public sphere in the Palestinian diaspora and the conditions around it, other important researchable questions in close areas have actually emerged. The focus of such questions can be directed towards examining, for instance; the variation of formation conditions among the public spheres in different locations in the Palestinian diaspora; the characteristics of the Palestinian public spheres formed in public chat rooms or forums in comparison to the one I have studied, the possibility of creating a public sphere among a certain group of Palestinians inside the OPT, and the similarities and differences between the characteristics and motivations of the developed public spheres outside and inside the OPT.

Eventually, I would like to remind that several practical opinions and perspectives can be concluded from the empirical research text; these procedures are distinctly useful to the reformation and enhancement process of the PA political communication approach towards the PCs abroad.

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### **4. Official Documents**

The Palestinian Diplomatic Cord Law (2005); an official document that is formulated in Arabic, the document is not attached due to lack of permission.

# Acknowledgment

My foremost thanks go to my supervisor George Strachal who constantly inspired me with significant ideas and directions throughout the writing process. Strachal has always encouraged me and showed trust and confidence in the work I have done.

Thanks to the Swedish Institute and Sida for providing me with the financial support to complete the necessities of this research as well as the rest of the MA courses. It would be impossible to complete my thesis requirement without their appreciated assistance.

I would also like to gratefully thank all of the participants and informants who richly contributed to the empirical part of the research. They all have been very cooperative, friendly, and extremely useful and exceptional sources.

I am additionally indebted to the rest of instructors at the MAGJ course who transferred an enormous amount of knowledge to our Global Journalism class this year.

Thanks to Dr. Leonor Camauer for helping me realizing a critical view over my work through her significant comments and remarks, and thanks to Maria Ljunggren for her respectable cooperation and gracious manner.

Thanks to Dr. Kamal El Shrafi, Mrs. Huda Hamouda, Mr. Fathi Tobail, and all my professional colleagues for offering me all the help and support to continue my post-graduate studies this year.

Thanks to the Palestinagrupperna in Stockholm, both Palestinian embassies in Stockholm and London, Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Palestinian Ministry of Information, State Information Service, and Wafa News Agency for facilitating the procedures of this research.

Thanks to my parents who have created a perfect study atmosphere at our home over the last years, and relentlessly encouraged me to enter the academic world.

Finally, my thanks go to all my MA colleagues and, in particular, Mia Verhoeff whom I consulted regularly during the different research stages.

Thank You All

