BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

Development Studies Programme

Community Organizing in the West Bank:

Opportunities and Obstacles in Civil Society,

2000-2003

Case studies: Awarta, Al Mazra'a Al Sharqyia, Al Burj

November 2004

Work Team:

Sarah Jessup : Principal Researcher & Author
Nader Said : Principal Researcher, Overall Supervisor, Reviewer
Shahnaz Jubran: Researcher, Research Coordinator

Field Researchers:

Rania Istefan
May Nazzal
Sona Hnihen
Burhan Abdullah
Sulaiman Qawariq
Sa'ed Al-Faqayat

Ayman Abdelmajeed: Field work consultant

Reviewers:

Jamil Hilal
Khalil Nakhleh
Yasser Shalabi
Tarek Talhami

Preface and Acknowledgement

We are grateful to the residents of Awarta, Almazra' Asharqiya, and Alburj. Their input and insight made this study possible. We tried our best to be true to their analyses, aspirations, and priorities. Their participation reinforced our objective approach to the study. In a few instances, the analyses of the researchers (outsiders to some extent) was predominant. Not all the views elaborated in this manuscript truly express the views of all the residents of the villages; nor do they always express the views of DSP or the support agency.

We would also like to express our deepest appreciation to the Ford Foundation; the support of Ms. Emma Playfair and Ms. Sharry Lapp is outstanding.

Finally, and on behalf of the work team, I hope that this study would be a useful resource for planning agencies, government and non-governmental organizations in way of assisting Palestinian society to achieve its national and development goals.

Nader Said

DSP, Director

Outline

Executive Summary

This Study investigates the types of local committees and voluntary groups organized to address community problems and hardships related to the events of current *Intifada* (starting September 2000) in three West Bank villages. The project was designed to explore how the destruction of infrastructure and economy was managed at the community level, and whether local groups, of the type found in civil societies, existed or were being formed to handle local issues including curfews, closures, unemployment, electricity and water problems, and shortages, to name a few of the most persistent break downs in the social structure during the *Intifada*.

The project was based on six months' research carried out in three West Bank villages, in the areas around Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron, between October 2002 and May 2003. Three researchers based in these cities worked with three research assistants who lived in the villages. The researchers visited the villages to conduct field work in conjunction with their local assistants. The principal researcher for the project is an anthropologist, and the author of this document. One DSP staff member, Shahenaz Jobran, was put in charge of all contact and communication between the researchers, the research assistants, and the principal researcher because the principal researcher does not speak Arabic, and the researchers do not speak English. Dr. Nader Said, DSP Director provided insight and advise all through the research. He wrote the original proposal, gave theoretical and methodological direction, revised and edited the study. The research was divided into three stages, and three interim meetings in Ramallah between researchers, research assistants, the principal researcher, and Ms. Jobran were held to address questions and help to focus the research.

Research showed that while there were many individual coping strategies employed, there were few large group efforts in operation, or few civil society-type grassroots support units initiated during the *Intifada*. Some smaller-scale groups did meet for mutual assistance. The range of these groups varied between villages, and related to the types of economies and the types of relationships with local governments and with local NGOs. It is theorized here that the reason for this lack of a unified wide-scale response has to do with the nature of the hardships in this *Intifada*, which were mainly economic, as well as problems in communication and transportation caused by the Israeli-imposed closure, which isolated the villages. Alienation and depression seemed common in the villages, and there was little energy to form community-wide responses. Several entrepreneurial projects were launched by individuals in the villages, but larger, coordinated efforts by local groups to address hardship were rare. An additional factor inhibiting group organization was the position of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the role of the local governments, which while largely powerless, were nonetheless looked to by the local populations for expected support. In some cases, soured relations between local populations and these governments led to, or were exacerbated by locals' blaming the public sector for its weak social services.

The emerging form of the PA was an important political, economic, and social background for this report. As the future Palestinian state is shaped and stymied by the *Intifada*, Palestinian society's relationship to that public body is similarly developing, and expectations are forming about the role of government in community life.

1. Introduction

In focusing on the breakdown in governmental and civic infrastructure, this research project examines how residents of three West Bank villages coordinated support to cope with community disorder during the last three years of the *Intifada*, from 2000-2003. During these years of economic hardship, deprivation, and socio-political turmoil, jobs were lost, roads cut off, shortages frequent, and emotional stress levels consistently high. The loss of income, decreased functioning of most government offices, destruction of property, road closures, and curfews profoundly affected not only the individual lives of Palestinians, but also the functioning of the cities they lived in and relied on for institutional services. With local governments unable to address many of these and other needs, individuals and groups were forced to create solutions themselves. This research did not focus on short-term informal strategies for survival, such as sharing food, or loaning money, nor did it examine political resistance. Instead, the goals of this project were to determine the extent to which local communities worked collectively to replace or supplement local governmental institutions or services that were destroyed or made ineffective during the disruption and destruction of the occupation during the Intifada years.

There are few long-term academic or professional ethnographic studies of contemporary West Bank or Gaza communities, particularly concerning current cultural conditions, including local values, and local perspectives on how life is lived there. Typically, ethnographic studies examine cultural issues through detailed, year long, anthropologically-informed field research projects. There are numerous studies of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and much polling and statistical work on conflict-related demographic trends. This excellent and voluminous short term statistical and polling work includes quality of life indicators in the West Bank and Gaza during the Intifada. There have been some qualitative studies on Palestinian life during the Intifada, notably "Coping with Conflict: Palestinian Communities Two Years into the Intifada" by Fafo (February 2003), and the World Bank's 2003 "Twenty-seven Months - Intifada, Closures, and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment, Vol. 1 of 1," as well as their 2003 "World Bank Report on Impact of the Intifada, Vol. 1 of 1" and "Fifteen Months – Intifada, Closures, and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment" (2003). An earlier study, also by Fafo (1993/4), "Palestinian Society: A Survey of Living Conditions", provide analysis of cultural issues relevant to the struggle to survive the Israeli occupation.

This present project is an attempt to supply an anthropologically informed study of cultural issues regarding public organizing during the crisis. Like the Fafo reports, this one explores conditions in Palestinian communities, with an emphasis on culturally informed coping strategies to address the hardships in a public forum. The report differs from the Fafo ones in that the focus is on civil society – the formation of public voluntary groups organized around civic interests.

The above-mentioned projects explored Palestinian responses during this Intifada through different types of research and reports. As these projects focused on individual or family-based strategies, however, the civil society-type community responses and community relationships during the crisis remain somewhat unknown. Individual types of responses and coping strategies do not address the complex or multifaceted problems resulting from obstruction or destruction of shared resources, for example, where a more organized, more powerful local group would be needed to form alternative strategies to cope with problems

in such areas as education, water distribution, and transportation. There is a strong history of civil society organizations in Palestine that were particularly active during the first Intifada (1987-1993). These groups formed alternative facilities and support networks for Palestinians who could not or would not rely on limited Israeli infrastructure. Complicating the picture of community-based responses is the recognizable response in crises to protect oneself, a defense mechanism isolating families or individuals, where only immediate friends and family receive mutual assistance. The questions that this report seeks to answer address the existence and type of community-wide responses in the face of prolonged stress: Did civil society organizations flourish in this difficult environment? Did individuals and local groups work together to share the burdens of the situation? Did they organize groups independent of the village governments or the PA or UN or NGO groups? To what extent were they able to respond on their own? Or, did individuals and families reject participation in community projects in favor of withdrawing and conserving their own limited resources?

2. Background

As a response to a prolonged occupation, and Ariel Sharon's visit to Al Aqsa, on September 28, 2000 the second ("Al Aqsa") Intifada broke out and immediately escalated into a destructive, brutal confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis that has lasted, to date, more than three divisive years. While much violence centers on the death and maiming of individuals, other destruction includes the infrastructure and normal functioning of Palestinian society. The Palestinian economy has steadily eroded due in large part to unemployment, decreased production and restricted transportation; the PA and local Palestinian governments are barely able to provide basic services to the population, including health care, water, sewage maintenance, and electricity. Social relations are strained, cultural functions are simplified and daily life is relentlessly and anxiously framed by efforts to cope with the pressures of this crisis.

Aggressive Israeli policies that include closures, curfews, and military incursions prohibit Palestinians from living normal lives. Working, seeking medical assistance, shopping for necessities and visiting family and friends are all restricted at arbitrary and prolonged times subject to Israeli command. The partially completed construction of a barrier between Israel and the Palestinian Territories will further limit access not only between the two areas, but also within Palestinian villages. Related largely to inhibited transportation due to closures, particularly between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, but also within the Territories, employment, income, and production have stagnated for over three years. In 2002 the World Bank estimated that real Palestinian GDP declined by 16%, and predicted that it would continue to fall by 21% in 2002 (World Bank 2002). In the aftermath of the Israeli Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 and further restrictions imposed on Palestinians, 45,000 jobs were lost. By the end of 2002, of the 128,000 Palestinians working in Israel, 92,000 had lost their jobs (69,000 of 98,000 workers from the West Bank), and of Palestinians working within the West Bank, 11,000 had lost theirs. This showed a slight improvement from a period in early 2002 when 327,000 had lost their jobs. For every breadwinner, 5.8 people are dependent on his (or her) income (World Bank 2003a).

Prior to the Intifada, Palestine was heavily dependent on exported labor, including to Israel; indeed, net incomes from abroad provided more than 21 percent of Palestinian Real Gross National Income (GNI). Palestine had one of the most remittance-dependent

economies in the world. Because of this dependence on labor from abroad, the Israeli closures have had a devastating impact on the Palestinian economy. By the end of 2002 GNI had declined 36% from 2000. Taking into consideration a 9% population growth, per capita incomes were 41% lower in 2002 than in 2000. According to the World Bank's poverty line of US$2.1 per day, 60% of Palestinians experienced poverty by December 2002 (World Bank 2003b).

According to the World Bank, one continuously functioning – albeit compromised - system, the PA, has been an important source of support to many Palestinians and saved the Territories from what would have been even more devastating conditions. The PA employs 125,000 people, roughly 26% of those still working in the West Bank and Gaza; this income accounts for 40% of domestic wages (World Bank 2003b). Further, the PA provides some necessary social services to the local populations. Yet as this report shows, the role of the PA is not so uncomplicated, and it is also a source of widespread frustration, partially related to the lack of services.

Somehow, people are coping with the difficult and depressed conditions, using a variety of methods and with very uneven levels of comfort. Frequent reports and statistical polling by the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations among others have documented local experiences during the Intifada. A detailed, anthropologically-informed February 2003 Fafo report sponsored by the Norwegian government examined different survival skills of individuals and families. These strategies ranged from cutting back on expenses like electricity and car use, to buying cheaper food, to creating new forms of business, to receiving support from different NGOs, to emigration abroad. Despite the widespread hardship, as well as the climate of fear and anxiety that pervades the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinians have managed to survive, and the stories of how are poignant and compelling. The long term future of the different strategies is by no means secure, and the future of Palestinian society and well being depends in large part on the eventual end of the current events, the lifting of Israeli closures and curfews against the Palestinians, the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the development of a fair and democratic political process.

An important part of the Palestinian community depends on the strength of the clan. The hierarchal clan unit organizes family relationships and forms a network of support and obligation that extends within and between villages. Clans and family members do not always provide necessary support, related in part to inter-clan conflicts (see Fafo 2003 for a description of clan conflicts regarding mutual aid). But clans are an important part of the organization of Palestinian villages and village alliances. This research focuses on the public community, and on the formation of support groups outside of the clan network. Researchers sought out the existence of spontaneous and crisis-driven groups and collective coping strategies, not the types of established alliances common to clans. The types of organizations, including NGO groups, which developed in the villages during the last three years were primarily, and ideally, meant to serve the community as a whole, not aligned and extended family groups.

Studies of tribal societies, which include clan networks, focus on the making of alliances and conflicts between groups. Often based on age and gender-biased hierarchies, clans participate in complex trade networks frequently studied in terms of elaborate gift exchanges (also called "primitive exchange" - see Mauss 1967; Sahlins 1965; and Levi-Strauss 1969 for definitions). In clan societies, group nepotism is a common strategy meant

to ensure the survival of kin networks. An "axiom of amity" is a presumption that kin are entitled to aid simply because they are kin. This sort of kin altruism is socially imposed, motivated less by affection than by social pressures (Jones 2000). Palestinian societies are an uneven mixture of state organization, civil society organizations including political groups, NGOs and unions. Israeli colonial administration and local clan societies, or hamulas (extended families). Thus the support that kin networks rely on are complicated by other organizational structures and alliances. Further, much of Palestinian society is rural; the West Bank is primarily organized along lineage lines, a factor which raises questions of the possible solidarity to local voluntary groups that could transcend kin alliances. This report's focus on the local and state administrative layers of Palestinian communities is intended in part to assess the freedom to associate; the constraints during the Intifada are a significant hurdle, but among many, including clan networks, in the development of this feature of civil society.

In contrast to, or perhaps alongside of the clan structure, people's immediate family members provide networks and resources for coping, which suggests the presence of something that might be called 'private communal networks.' Despite this research's focus on public, communal networks of support, attention is paid to the existence of clans. Their private communal networks of support provide resources for coping, which may inhibit the development of public community networks.

3. Theoretical Background

This project is a short term, qualitative anthropological study aimed at clarifying the theoretical issues concerning public communal support groups in Palestine. Studies of civil society inform this research. In certain areas of the Middle East, namely Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, there is evidence of the emergence of civil society. Based largely on a Western European and United States structure and model of political philosophy, theories of civil society suggest a certain independence from the state. Civil society is considered one of many prerequisites for the establishment of a democracy. Perhaps the most important aspect in a civil society is the principle of free association or participation in voluntary associations that meet and interact not only for their own sake, but for the sake of a wider sector of the population. This individual and/or group autonomy from the state includes most types of civic-oriented groups, for example unions, clubs, charities, and religious associations (Aras and Karaman 2002; Muslih 1993). Other relevant conditions for effective cooperative networks include strong ties to other members of the community, structural similarity to other high level members (i.e., not too wide a separation in income, education, etc.), and a sense of community identity (Mithun 1973; Gotham 1999; Kitts 1999).

Positive conditions for the development of civil society clearly implicate the role of the state. A study of Algeria's short-lived experiment with liberalization and democratization between 1989 and 1991 suggests that the relationship between state personnel and social structures is critical to the success of a transition away from authoritarianism. An authoritarian state that implements policies without proper local support or legitimacy will not produce the necessary conditions for the transition to democracy or democratic tolerance (Zoubir 1996). Further, an overly centralized state inhibits the development of grass roots organizations because responsible citizenship and collective responsibility through participation is not encouraged, and thus community development suffers (see for example Ndiaye 1999 on African voluntary grassroots organizations).

Civil society has also been associated with Islam and democracy in many contemporary Middle East states, with mixed results. Historically, Islam has been linked to the development of civil society through charitable organizations, including in Palestine, and is a significant socio-political alternative in the remaking of many Middle Eastern regimes. One serious problem in the inclusion of Islam in political platforms, however, has been its frequent co-optation by authoritarian governments as a means to control social and economic problems and political opposition (Esposito 2000). While Palestinian local governments and the PA are officially secular, there is a history of Islamic charitable organizations dating back to the British Mandate, and it is unclear how much a role religion will play in the future state. The current role of religion as a form of civil society is evident in the increasing strength of Hamas in Palestinian communities, the increase in religious practices (and affiliation with mosques), and the development of mosques as centers for support and activity.

Civil society in Palestine has a long history dating back to different forms of voluntary groups during the British Mandate of 1917-1948 (see Abu Ghazaleh 1972; Khalaf 1991; Lesch 1979 on local organizing and Arab nationalism) and particularly up to and during the first Intifada, from 1987-1992. During the first Intifada, civil society groups were largely served by the Israeli occupation, wherein voluntary Palestinian groups offered their labor and carried out services necessary to the survival of the community. This practice had the advantage of maintaining a sense of social order and identity during a prolonged period of crisis (Aras and Karaman 2000). There were political groups under the PLO, as well as charity organizations, unions, and nationalist groups. Since the establishment of the PA in 1994, civil society has operated in a different environment of more centralized authority. Some see civil society as eroding under the PA, although the existence of vibrant Islamic militant groups is also seen as a different version of civil society. The general nature of the voluntary groups has changed in the last ten years, from charitable organizations to nationalist ones to development-oriented ones. Hammami et.al. (2001) provide and in-depth examination of civil society groups and a description of the 1150 civil society organizations that existed as of 1998. They range in subject area from political groups (18); unions (252); charitable organizations (450); development groups (80); human rights/democracy (30); independent research groups (53); and cultural groups (150). As mentioned, significant changes to the make up of these groups in the last ten years includes the increased role of Islamist charity or welfare organizations in providing youth and day care programs, as well as the propagation of religious ideology.

The first Intifada was notable for Palestinian withdrawal from various Israeli forms of control in favor of efforts to build a civil society in Palestine (Hammami et.al. 2001). Such activities as the boycott of Israeli products and its civil administration were accompanied by nationalist enthusiasm for the establishment of Palestinian alternatives. For example, when the Israelis closed schools, clandestine groups organized classes. While members of "popular committees," which organized activities among Palestinians, were beaten and the groups destroyed by the Israelis, other informal organizations also existed that featured non-cultural activities in peasant cooperatives, women's associations, trade union activities, and straightforward political action. Since the establishment of the PA, a different tension has emerged alongside the external (Israeli) vs. internal (Palestinian) conflict, and includes issues such as the assertion of community-based groups to defend their autonomy against the encroachment of the public sector; the struggle for a free press; the autonomy of the judiciary; the independence of the academic establishment; and the nature of legislation in the Palestinian state (Hammami et.al. 2001). This project explores

the range of informal voluntary organizations that exist during this crisis, taking into account the multiple pressures of the emerging (though now somewhat static) public sector and in particular, the current limitations on daily life.

The constraints of a state system, in the form of the PA, the existence of clan networks, and the Israeli occupation provide a complex setting for the continued formation and existence of informal voluntary groups in Palestine today. The PA in no way substitutes for a state, and it has a limited range of powers normally afforded to states related to the agreement with Israel that established its existence (the Interim Palestinian-Israeli Agreement, signed in 1995). The ambiguity regarding the exact contours (not to mention physical boundaries) of the Palestinian political "entity" is a factor influencing the modes of rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestine is making, loosely defined, a move away from a colonially administered state into an independent one - regardless of the caveats on these definitions. By examining this transitional period, the development of future Palestinian statehood, and the possibilities of a free and fair democratic society can be mapped.

For the continued existence of civil society organizations under the PA (or any future political entity in Palestine that is less dependent on Israel for social services), the forms of many groups started prior to the founding of the PA need to change. Earlier types of social service and political groupings are not necessary under a state system that provides for the welfare of its citizens. Yet the current role of civil society organizations under the PA is predictably unclear, given the long independent history of those organizations, the PA's somewhat vague role as a state, its limited ability to provide services, and the PA's sometimes uneasy relationship to the population. According to Hammami et.al (2001), local areas of conflict with the PA currently include legitimacy, as some organizations represent themselves as political alternatives to the PA; competition, as some organizations overlap with PA organs, including the trade union federation, while others were seen as undermining the role of new ministries; and autonomy, as the PA has moved toward restrictive legislation of independent organizations. Related to these issues, a newer focus of civil society groups under the PA has been democracy and citizens' rights issues.

In addition to the reshaping of civil society organizations under the PA, the role of the clans will need to be defined and codified in relation to the state. Thus, it is suggested here that civil society organizations in Palestine may be in a transitional state, and should not be seen as definitive not only because of the Intifada, but until a national political organization is solidified and stabilized. A question that arises as Palestine establishes its post-colonial political identity is the kind of civil society that can exist and will be tolerated; issues to be addressed include the existence of religious organizations, clan-based village councils, private entrepreneurship, popular committees, and small self-help groups. Civil society as it existed in Palestine prior to 1994 may have been effective for that time, but a different form of civil society is emerging, and needs to be safeguarded, under different circumstances and for a different political, economic and social climate.

Palestinian communities, during the Intifada, and due to the unusual political situation, exist in what anthropologist Victor Turner identified as a 'liminal,' or transitional state, one outside normal social structures (1982). In a liminal state, there can occur something Turner called 'communitas', a spontaneous and unusual bonding between or among people. Those undergoing some sort of social or physical transformation are in liminal states, between defined social categories, and frequently participate in the close and creative bonding that occurs as communitas. Turner writes, "there is no specific social

form that is held to express spontaneous communitas. Rather is it expected best to arise in the intervals between incumbencies of social positions and statuses, in what used to be known as 'the interstices of social structure'." People or societies in a liminal phase are a "kind of institutional capsule or pocket which contains the germ of future social developments, of societal change" (Turner, 1982).

Liberated from normal social constraints, individuals from different classes, backgrounds or even interests can develop strong bonds and new kinds of social projects in liminal states. It is the freedom from everyday structures that allows creative or new social forms to develop through the new types of relationships formed in communitas. In Palestine, the Intifada provides just such a transitional environment; so too does the movement toward statehood. The constraints and hardship of this period have forced people and communities to seek alternative forms of bill paying, employment, educational responsibility, and transportation, for example. The type of communitas in Palestinian villages varies, as will be shown in the examples from the field work, and the types of civil society, while much reduced since September 2000, also indicate creative forms of relationships to the public sector, and to the public community. Yet complicating the picture of spontaneous social bonding, there is also increased tension within families and communities during this time because of the external chaos, suggesting a compromised form of communitas.

One of the research objectives of this project was to distinguish between temporary crisis-driven changes to the local communities, and what could be seen as potential long term changes to Palestinian communities. In exploring some of the motivations for joining voluntary groups, this project also examines the potential for long term commitments to these groups. If groups are merely temporary measures meant to alleviate some of the pressures during the Intifada, and to substitute much needed infrastructure, they will only last until a bigger organization takes over, such as the PA or an NGO. The constraints on the formation of voluntary groups is an important consideration; such social issues such as anomie, or alienation from the larger social body may currently affect participation. The existence of a collective spirit might therefore suggest a sense of a national or cultural identification and resolve against the imposed hardships.

There were no significant studies of the first Intifada, which took place between 1987 and 1992, that assessed the long term changes, and there were not enough pre-Intifada studies to offer a comprehensive comparison with that time. This study is intended to serve as a guidepost for future studies of the Intifada. It provides a reference, and an indication of certain changes for future comparison. Local committees and groups formed in some cases for job development, or for special services that served presumably short term interests. Long term structural change to local communities was difficult to anticipate, because it was unclear what types of local government would be in place once the disruptions subsided, and whether the committees and groups that developed alternative strategies would continue or need to exist. This report can thus be used as an interim assessment of the types of local changes that took place, and an indicator of sites for future research on communal coping strategies and the development of Palestinian civil society.

4. Field Sites

The villages chosen for this study are not considered "representational" in that no one place could be seen as embodying all cultural conditions. Instead, the villages were chosen for their somewhat different economic bases: one village depended on remittances from

abroad, one on work in Israel, and one to some degree on agriculture, although it too recently switched to a stronger dependency on Israel for wage labor. The villages were also chosen for their regional spread, one in the Nablus area (north), one in the Ramallah area (middle), and one in the Hebron area (south).

The field sites were three different villages in the West Bank, Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, in the Ramallah district; Awarta, in the Nablus district; and Al Burj, in the Al-Khalil (Hebron) district. This regional spread also allowed the research to encompass part of the wide variety of cultural and local historical differences throughout the West Bank. It was also necessary to assess a wider range of coping strategies and groups being formed: and it was then possible to determine the influence of local norms on these strategies. Gaza was not selected because of the disproportionate dependency of the many refugees there on outside assistance, primarily from UNRWA, and because of the predominantly urban nature. Villages selected encompassed urban, rural and semi rural environments, and their different economic systems showed a range of dependency on Israel for work.

Ramallah: The village of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was outside Ramallah, and its economy was largely based on remittances sent from local residents working overseas. Many, but not all families were thus unaffected, or little affected, by the economic hardships caused by job loss during the last two years.

Nablus: In the village of Awarta, outside Nablus, workers commuted to the Israeli settlement of Itamar or to Nablus to work before the Intifada began. Many families suffered loss of incomes due to the closures and restricted movement in the village and the inability to leave the village to look for other work.

Hebron: The village of Al Burj in the Hebron area, depended on Israel as source of income since the seventies. This village was moderately affected by the Intifada, and less affected than Awarta in terms of economic hardship, inconvenience and infrastructure breakdown.

The Palestinian economy is based mainly on wage labor and small businesses whose employees commonly commute to work either within the West Bank or across the Green Line to Israel. The largest employers are the Palestinian Authority, and other large public or semi public institutions, such as the numerous NGOs providing assistance to people in the territories. Many people have found work in Israel and its settlements. Prior to this Intifada, more than 125,00 workers were employed in those areas, usually as wage laborers where they could earn twice as much they could as in the West Bank. Because of the commuting requirements of these workers both within and outside of the West Bank, Israeli-enforced road closures and travel restrictions have been particularly inconveniencing -- to the employment force as well as to the many businesses and organizations whose members were regularly detained (Fafo, 2003).

Prior to September 2000, the World Bank reported that the West Bank/Gaza ranked as a lower-middle income country, with higher than average (for the region) literacy and health care. The population doubles every 20 years due to natural growth, and because of the young age of the population, in addition to only 13% of women working, less than 50% of the population is engaged in the labor force. At least 60% of output is in services, and 10% in agriculture, with the remaining 30% in manufacturing and construction. Of the agriculture force, most West Bank agriculture consists of small and medium size farms (World Bank 2002).

Infrastructure in the West Bank is varied and results from a combination of local resources, local government initiative, local relationships with the PA, the Israeli government and inter-clan relationships. An interesting finding of this research was the wide variety in the relationships of the local governments to population and the issues affecting that relationship. There was a feeling of mistrust toward the PA and toward the local councils for not serving the population better. The PA has limited control over land, no control over water, transport of goods and people, or access to external markets. Thus there is a limited range of governmental control over services to the Palestinian population, although there is some authority in delivery of public services, law enforcement and legislative power. Frequently, services including road repair, water, or electricity are administered by aid organizations, or by the Israeli government (World Bank 2000; World Bank 2002). Many people who are still employed work for the PA or for aid organizations (World Bank 2003a).

5. Methodology

This research was informed by anthropological considerations of the importance of local perspectives. This emphasis on the "native's point of view" privileges outlooks and insight by local informants over that of outsiders as more informed about practices, constraints, and interpretations. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) advocated the use of "thick description" as a way to explore not just what is observed, but the interpretation of behavior with regard to local values, attitudes, and history. This anthropological approach examines practices and seeks to explain them, to give them meaning, by explaining the context in which the practices arise. Thus, local culture is shown to have a logic that is obvious with sufficient understanding of relevant issues. In this research, coping strategies, or lack thereof, were usually related to economic, social and political issues, as well as to established local habits, understandings and attitudes.

The research methods used in this study included interviews, focus groups, and oral histories, and to some degree, the anthropological technique of participant-observation. In this approach, researchers attempt to integrate themselves into a local community to experience first hand activities and events that are significant or meaningful or relevant to a particular study. Anthropologists live in a community, and experience daily life just as local informants do for a prolonged period of time, becoming accepted by the community as best they can. This project only partially relied on participant-observation because the main researchers were unable to live in the villages. To overcome that obstacle, a research assistant was chosen who lived in the village. The local research assistant's familiarity with the village structure, with inhabitants, and his knowledge of everyday practices complemented the researcher's outsider status.

Fieldwork was conducted between October 2002 and May 2003. The length of the field research was three months, stretched out over a six month period. The research was divided into three stages, during which time researchers made repeated visits to the villages. Researchers conducted 30 interviews in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya; 26 interviews in Awarta, and 27 interviews in Al Burj. Focus groups and oral histories also comprised part of the research. Three monthly meetings were held in Ramallah with the principal researcher and the DSP staff where research progress was assessed. At these meetings, researchers and staff raised questions about the project, difficulties researchers had in the field or with interviewees, and the directions of the research. The information discussed at these meetings provided insight and direction on the progress of the research. Future

questions and approaches were supplied to the researchers that were based on an informed understanding of local conditions.

The research in this project benefited from a team approach. A local research assistant, native to the village, provided introductions and explanations to the outside researcher, who was from the nearby city of Ramallah, Nablus or Hebron. This collective approach was used for several reasons. First, a local researcher (a "native") often does not see patterns of behavior as clearly as an outsider can. Too familiar with particular customs and attitudes, a local observer is liable to overlook interesting and important behaviors that would be obvious to an outsider and significant to a study. Further, ties to particular groups and individuals might predetermine a native's analysis. An outsider brings a fresh eye to a local scene, is likely to be more observant and attuned to local conditions and is unencumbered by affiliations with particular groups or individuals. Yet, an outsider is also unfamiliar with the local setting, and needs the explanations of local history and introductions that the native informant can offer. The combination of an outside, female researcher with a local, male research assistant provided the mutually complementary keenness of new observation with the local knowledge of an insider. Given the constraints of the research, this approach was the most efficient use of time and the capabilities of the researchers.

Gender

A female researcher was chosen for a variety of reasons relating to the project's methodology and theoretical approach. The theoretical literature on civil society points to the importance of a pre-existing social network for women's participation in voluntary groups, as well as to the high opportunity costs of joining groups for income-earning women (Weinberger and Jutting 2001). Further, Palestinian cultural norms tended toward segregated gender groupings. Thus, assessing women's groups, or the potential for women's participation required access to women's networks and trust. It was determined that a female researcher was necessary in order to gain widest possible access to members of these communities. A female researcher has access to both women and men, and women's and most men's groups, while a male researcher generally, and most comfortably, only has access to men and male groups. Further, a female researcher might be more attuned to issues of gender, and the importance of understand female roles and perspectives, which are a significant but easily overlooked aspect to the way communities work, as women often have non-public roles. The care of children is often in the hands of women, as are household finances. The role of women was particularly important to this project in light of the fact that many families were forced to spend more time together during the last two years. In forced company during times of stress, family dynamics take on new significance. The role of female voices and perspectives in the running of households, and strategizing for alternative family incomes became more important, as the conflicts within families also increased. All of these issues were relevant to the research, and a female head researcher was better able to access these problems than most male colleagues could have. What skills the researcher used to encourage the women who never been asked about their situations? How the researcher managed to deliver clear massages to the inexperienced, non-educated women.

While this research is informed by anthropological considerations for local knowledge, and much of the interviewing was conducted with regard to anthropological methodology, time constraints, gender issues and restricted access to the villages for the researchers

constrained the anthropological nature of the research. As mentioned, typically anthropologists rely on long-term field research, living in a community for as much as a year in order to understand particular issues and attitudes. This research had challenges in timing and logistics related in large part to the Intifada. A delay at the original start of the project, in the spring of 2002 during the Israeli military's "Operation Defensive Shield," was due to the fear that the researchers would be subject to searches and harassment by the Israeli army for travel to and from villages where they did not live and knew few people. Further, closures and travel restrictions imposed on most of Palestinian society affected this research. Lastly, the female researchers were not able to live in the villages because of family and social concerns about their being alone. Because of the intensity of the Intifada, and the uncertainty of its duration, the research was originally conceived as a three-month project. Three months was determined sufficient to understand how communities were working together and under what types of conditions. The three month time frame was extended to a period of six months because of constraints on the researchers' access to the villages and to Ramallah. Travel to Ramallah took the researchers up to a full day, and at least several hours to travel distances of a few dozen miles at most. As events changed and research had to be delayed in Spring 2002 because of the Israeli seizures of much of the West Bank, it became important to assess the coping strategies as quickly as possible without compromising the research. Further delays due to curfews held up several meetings, and the arduous travel between the researchers' homes and their field site meant that little work could be accomplished at any particular time. Problems with translation held up the report further. The field notes and documents were all in Arabic and were summarized by the DSP staff for the principal researcher to use as full translation of the materials was considered to be outside the budget limits.

This study should be used as a guide for further, more in-depth research. It is not a qualitative or systematic quantitative scientific assessment of the issues in civil societies, or local group formations or the group strategies in crisis management. The data show a range of attitudes and practices at the local level, and anecdotal information as reported to one native researcher and one outside researcher in each village, information reviewed and analyzed by an outside anthropologist. The information collected by the hard work of the research teams, and with the dedicated assistance of the DSP staff points to the steady existence of civil society-type groups, albeit constrained by political changes and economic problems and increasingly, inertia. Based on these indications of the potential for more fully developed civil society groupings, future research can be designed and planned that benefit from a clearer picture of these issues.

Research questions are included in the appendix. Questions initially focused on village conditions: the type of local government, local history of relationships to the PA, the numbers of schools, public facilities, types of social services, and the existence of voluntary groups from before the Intifada started, and those started since September 2000. Subsequent questions focused on types of deprivation, and local conditions – the types of hardship and how they were addressed. Many of the focus groups and local histories addressed the lack of voluntary groups – what constraints impeded the founding of more groups and what were particular local problems related to the Intifada.

6. Research Results

The organizations or groups set up to address deprivation and infrastructural loss differed according to local conditions, including economies, leadership, relationships to the PA,

relationships to the outside (Israel, USA, other countries); and local history. One of the most important determining factors in the levels of local groups and organizations set up to help individuals was the strength of the local council, and local relationships to the different political parties: Fatah (mainstream nationalist), Hamas (Islamist) and PFLP (leftist). For example, in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya there was a higher degree of informal group formation, for such issues as transportation and tree planting. Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was the wealthiest village, and members had the resources to contribute to projects. Mistrust of the PA seemed to reflect on the activities of the local council, and the council's authority in maintaining many social services. The weakness of the councils in Al Burj however, or Awarta, seemed to relate in part to insufficient funds.

The relative power of the local councils seemed in proportion to the weakness, or perceived weakness of the PA to local residents. The strength of the local councils could be measured in terms of whether the members were sought out for conflict resolution (for land or inheritance issues) or other problems, including school closures. For example, villages where there was an active council that sought to alleviate thorny or difficult social as well as infrastructural problems seemed to have a greater degree of legitimacy. There were numerous complaints about village council members, and their accountability. Council members in turn complained that residents did not respect their authority, evident in such areas as bill payment.

The villages were increasingly self reliant, after two years of inconsistent local and national governmental assistance. The village with the most collective activity for solving infrastructural problems was Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, not coincidentally also the wealthiest village and members were able to pay bills and tuition. Indeed, a reason given in the other villages for not organizing or joining groups was a fear of being called upon to donate money, which few had. Some of the activity done in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was non-essential, or cosmetic: raising money to plant trees along certain streets, for example. All villages suffered from entrenched political power struggles of different sorts: between generations, between old and new governments, or between powerful and less powerful members of the community, and between the political parties, although these tensions were often conducted between local groups supported by the political parties. The nature of the relationship stymied real and necessary change. In the absence of smoothly functioning governments, poorer and disadvantaged members of the communities suffered as established power blocs maintained and competed over control. The most important problem in this regard was the thwarting of new groups forming by the local councils or other community forces.

In distinction to other research, which points to the improved status of women over the last ten years, according to many informants the status of women worsened under the PA. Women reportedly had a greater role in protests and organizing during the first Intifada, but those activities were said to have stopped when the PA came to power. The role of women did not appear to have changed significantly or consistently throughout all three villages during this Intifada. Many more women were working for money, by taking in embroidery, for example, and more seemed to have to prepare for a greater role in making an income by taking classes for a high school equivalency or other subjects. Yet others did not work and stayed at home despite the possible need for their productive labor. There was not uniformly said to be a correspondingly higher status for women who earned incomes.

While the Intifada and the events during the Israeli-imposed restrictions were commonly blamed for much that does not work in Palestinian communities, a secondary source of problems was the functioning of the PA and local governments. Indeed, informants commonly blamed these semi-elected bodies for the poor running of their communities. While the restrictions have undoubtedly worsened conditions, tensions between the local communities and the public sector are mounting, and are a critical area for reform.

The existence of civil society was evident in a few cases of local groups strategizing to address infrastructural problems, or community issues that the local council was unable to address, such as building roads or starting schools. More common were cases of clubs and groups formed to deal with individual issues, such as employment, or entertainment activities, and a larger amount of entrepreneurial activities, particularly in Awarta and Al Burj.

A strong undercurrent in all the villages' social issues was the tense political climate, both national and local. Many residents expressed unhappiness with the local governments, and in Al Burj the unpopular local council had recently been replaced with a new one the local council. The replacement came out as a result of mounting debt owed to the electricity company.

Constraints imposed on change, and potentially, on the development of informal groups stemmed from the local councils, or were perceived to. The traditional village councils, now appointed by the PA, existed in the form of established older groups of men (usually one from each of the families). This form of local government exercised considerable authority to hear or not hear particular complaints, and to develop or thwart the creation of certain clubs. For example, there was some gap between the interests of the older men on the council, who generally preferred that men and women did not mix, in schools or social clubs, and younger people, who felt that they should mix. This is not to say that all older men are conservative, and that all younger men are progressive. In many cases, it's the opposite.

Many traditional structures and patterns were challenged, or weakened, although others reemerged in the last three years. The last few years of hardship did not create an empowering environment for women to assert themselves, for example. A few women started working outside as well as inside the home (taking in sewing, for example), or taking courses to prepare to work, as their husbands were out of work. There were conflicting reports within villages on whether women who worked outside the home had a correspondingly stronger position inside the household. There were mixed reports on the amount of women working, and one widespread problem reported during this period was the increase in domestic violence, against both women and children. The village councils, the local governments, were weakened in terms of the work they could do, and therefore became less reliable to village residents.

For incomes and resources, people pieced things together for themselves, securing temporary support from family members, state services, or political parties. There was no consistent, sufficient, or reliable resource for all people. This independent challenge may have loaned itself to the way people treated each other. Many complained about poorer relations between neighbors and within the village. It took having resources to get people to be organized and inspired to work together, as was evident in al Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, where there was both more money and more voluntary groups. Awarta had a high number

of voluntary groups dating to before the Intifada, but most of those were inoperative. There was a popular local expectation there should be more public services, for widows of martyrs, for the disabled, for people with children in prison, for example. These expectations may have been formed during the last decade under the PA; it is interesting that despite the fact that there were so few services in operation, residents still had high standards for what a local government should provide for its people. Al Burj also witnessed the creation of a number of voluntary institutions and civil society organaizations.

7. Village Report

7.1 AL MAZRA'A AL SHARQIYA

Introduction

The village of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya is located roughly 15 kilometers northeast of Ramallah and is one of 11 communities in the Silwad micro-region. The total area of that micro-region is 40,000 dunams, with a total population of 38,000. It is a mountainous region, with a relatively good rainfall and potential for agricultural development. Only 19% of the Silwad area is cultivated although only 3% is irrigated. The largest agricultural product is olive trees, which are rain fed, and dependent on access to foreign markets (Center for Engineering and Planning 1995).

According to a 1997 census (PCBS), the population was 3,660 (1764 males and 1896 females). In addition to these residents of the village, another 8,685 former residents lived over seas but were still strongly connected to the village. The community area of Al Mazra'a Al Sharqiya is 16,333 dunums.

This village was chosen because of its particular and unusual economy: many of the absent members of the population sent remittances home to support the resident population. The village was wealthy by local standards, and while it also suffered social, psychological and infrastructural problems related to closures and other problems during the Intifada, it was much better off than the villages outside Nablus and Hebron economically and in terms of infrastructure. Further, and possibly related to the stronger economy, there was a much higher level of community participation in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya.

In 1995, there two schools, and one health clinics in the village. It compared favorably the Ramallah district for infrastructure in terms of paved internal roads, a water supply, electricity, telecommunications, and transportation (CEP: 26).

There were several books and articles on Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya socio-economic situation prior to this study. These studies are available in Arabic: Majdi Malki and Khamis Shalabi. (1993). Economic and Social Changes in Three Palestinian Villages; Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya Municipality. Manual of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya; PCBS and Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (2000) Manual of the Local Authorities.

Few communities in the Ramallah district had municipal councils or village councils. Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was "administered" by a council comprised of 9 members, elected in 1976. in 1988 the council resigned as a result of the Israeli killing of two young men in the village. There was an administrative vaccum until 1996 where a new council was selected under the PA.

The village consisted of five major family clans: Hijaz, Zeben, Sa'ad, Faraj and Shalabi, all of whom were represented at the village adminstration, which consisted of 9 male members.

Economy

Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was relatively wealthy because of remittances sent to many families by residents living overseas. This revenue, for the most part, continued throughout the *Intifada,* while in other villages jobs were lost and income decreased without any other form of income to sustain people. Most of the villages in the Silwad micro-region depended on remittances; these were accounted for the bulk of all incomes.

Labor in Israel and agriculture were marginal sources of income.

Some of the wealthy members of the population were insulated from the hardships due to the continued remittances. One wealthy woman whose husband and grown sons worked overseas explained:

> *"For us we were not affected by the Intifada except for the last three months, life is more expensive, but our income is from outside [the village]. And for my sons, their future is outside. Everything we needed was in the village, even if Ramallah closed, except for the hospitals and the dentist. My daughter stopped visiting the dentist because in the morning she goes to school and we can't reach Ramallah after that. I hear that there are some problems in the village and there are some needy people, but we are not affected. Regarding the [voluntary] organizations I know about the [women's] society but I don't participate in anything; most of the time I stay at home. I don't hear about the groups. I just visit my family and so do my daughters. We spent our time in doing housework, embroidery, TV and the internet, and my daughters study."*

While there were reports of groups forming, this shift to a more private, internally focused lifestyle was not uncommon in the villages, for a variety of reasons, and provided the main obstacle to civic involvement. In this case, the family's income shielded them from having to seek public support, but in other cases the curfews, depression and lack of interest also directed habits away from the community and inwards toward the nuclear or more immediate family.

The exodus of educated residents of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya occurred since the Intifada began two years ago. While many, but by no means all of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya residents were supported by these remittances, either in whole or in part, there were also local industries where many residences worked. There were 11 stone cutting factories, and two factories that manufacture building material, and some people returned to work in agriculture, mainly olive production. Since the Intifada began, the return to small scale agriculture was partly due to the fact that it was difficult if not impossible to commute to jobs within the West Bank, or to Israel.

Some residents returned to tending cattle to help support themselves. In addition to the financial interest in olive farming, according to interviews, residents of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya planted olive trees on their land to protect it and mark it as theirs, to try to save it from Israeli settlers who encroached on their property.

At a stone factory, 50% of the laborers worked part time. one owner of a stone cutting factory told researchers that in the last two years there were fewer laborers, and a decrease in the number of total work hours as a result of checkpoints and closure of the factory. He noted that "before the *Intifada*, I went to Jerusalem easily, but now we need people with a Jerusalem ID. Before the *Intifada* I thought of expanding my work. Now I'm afraid of not being able to compete in the market."

As in the other two villages, unemployment rate in the village rose during the *Intifada*, and 50% of the village wide workers were also cited as part time. More people were relying on remittances since closures and other economic hardships increased. Emigration abroad continued at an alarming rate of families as well as individuals. Over 40 families, 200 men, women and children, emigrated abroad in the last two years.

Overall, people had less disposable incomes and many local institutions and organizations closed largely related to the economic situation.

Local leadership

Local government was in the form of a local council. This form of local government in this village was established in 1965. The local council was newly reconstituted, having been disbanded in 1987 during the first *Intifada*. After the PA was established in 1994, the local council was "elected", after the Oslo accords mandated Palestinian political control over particular areas, including Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, in 1997 the village was declared a municipality, with younger participation.

Revenue for the local council came partly from remittances from families living overseas, and also from the owners of the stone factories. These were considered 'donations' not taxes, however, possibly because it was seen as voluntary payment. Tax payments had been irregular since the *Intifada*. Fees collected from business are also a source of income. The major sources of development related money came from the allocations given by the ministry of local government supported by underntional funding. Donations by citizens constitute the major bulk of the money needed to develop the village. For example, the local residents donated 70.000$ to build the main road (70% of the total cost)

As (will be illustrated later) in the case of Awarta and Al Burj, much of the local political and infrastructural issues stemmed from changes after the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, which helped end the first *Intifada*. The impact of the Oslo accords on the development to civil society cannot be assessed without taking into account the effect of the new PA (since 1994) on Palestinian communities.

In the case of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya , during the first *Intifada*, local government and political membership was dominated by various P.L.O factions, Fatah being the stronger party. Fatah's work was considered effective, even though its work was limited due to what was perceived as a "lack of a defined social agenda." After Oslo, the group weakened, and was then vied for power with the PA. While Fatah was less active during the years since Oslo, during this *Intifada*, Fatah's role was said to have increased partly in relation to the weakness of the PA. other P.L.O leftist groups had an important role in providing social services.
During the last two years, the village council's role expanded and its responsibilities increased. Some of the usual responsibilities undertaken by the council were garbage

collection; maintaining street lights; sewage; and granting building permission. During the last two years the council's work seems to have addressed current needs, particularly educating people in land possession rights, and opening one hundred agricultural roads for a total of 10 kilometers, to encourage people to work on their land. One major accomplishment of the council, which was done in conjunction with Fatah was the paving of the village's main road, completed in 2001.

A post office was also opened in 2001 by the Ministry of Communication, where people could pay their phone bills instead of taking them to Ramallah. The municipality paid for the new post office, provided the furniture, paid the electric and water bills, and provided them with stationary.

Further, a variety of domestic and local grievances and problems were taken to the council, instead of to the PA as part of a long tradition of resorting to local institutions. The perceived weakness of the PA's institutions, the blockade between the village and the PA's offices, and the PA's inability to address local problems were additional factors.

Thus the local council worked at times beyond its scope and was taxed by the extra work. Locals sought the help of the local council for a variety of issues. The main problems people brought to the council related to land disputes, or conflicts regarding inheritance; problems with schools, as teachers were prevented from reaching the schools due to the check points, and closures; and sanitation. The school problems were solved by offering local residency to the teachers so they could reach the classrooms more easily.

There was at least one new development. A girl's school was being newly constructed. The building was monitored by the local council and funding provided by the Emarets Red Crescent society.

Weakened Infrastructure

Transportation was an important and persistent problem. Local roads were generally in good condition. However external roads were poor, and access to the village through check points and road closures hampered all travel in all directions. There were many roads in need of paving but were not repaired.

The most acute and recurring problems were the challenges in maintaining community services: upkeep and replacing old facilities despite frequent closures, curfews, decreased incomes and general hardship, including psychological and social stresses. The worst problems were in sewage management, and transportation (poor roads, and the difficulty getting places due to closures). There were also problems in water, particularly in the more elevated areas; water could be cut off for many days. This is an old problem exacerbated by the Israeli company, that control the flow of water to the village. Garbage collection and

AL MAZRA'A AL SHARQIYA'A
Weakened infrastructure:
▪ Roads in poor condition   ▪ Closures of businesses   ▪ Increased school dropout rates   ▪ Decreased tax revenue   ▪ Sporadic water delivery   ▪ Sporadic garbage collection   ▪ Overtaxed sewage system

electricity service were erratic, also related to the closures. These were problems also related to the Israeli military presence and the possibility that they could and did destroy the road or close it at any time.

Education

Education for girls and boys, as in most parts of the Palestinian territories, was valued. There were many similarities in the hardships experienced in the different schools, although the most serious problem, dropping out related to early/adolescent marriage, exclusively happened to girl students. Boys on the other hand, had more activities for them organized by the local mosque. There had been a youth club, but this closed.

In the girls' secondary school, for ages 6-18, there were 624 students, which had decreased in the last few years due to emigration to the US. Problems at the school included transportation: getting to the school for teachers, students and administrators through the closures and poor roads. In addition to attrition due to emigration, early marriage, was a problem and accounted for many dropouts. While the school was fee based, in the last two years, wealthier families paid the fees of the poorer students. Additionally, remittances from overseas went to support the school. Other funding also came from the PA Ministry of Education. A $415,000 grant to repair damages to the girls school came from the Emarets Red Crescent Society in the United Arab Emirates.

Individual activity:
- School fees paid by wealthier families
- Remittances paid to local council by overseas residents

Community activity:
- Collective bill payment
- Urban tree project
- Women's committee training

The headmistress of the Al Anwar kindergarten noted that students were suffering from psychological problems related to the violence and stress during the last two years. Problems and disruptions were manifold. Anxieties were revealed in games, which involved soldiers chasing Palestinians. Other problems in the school included fewer school trips, as a result of the bad roads and restricted from travel, and because parents could no longer afford them. Teachers were not attending training courses, although literacy courses in the village increased, but due to the higher amount of girls who left school to marry early. Many newer students had also come from America where they had been living, and so didn't speak or read Arabic.

Students suffered from the increased social and family tensions. The assistant head master of the boy's primary school said that problems among students related to the widespread political violence include increased aggressiveness, lower concentration and lower grades. The performance of the teachers had also suffered during the *Intifada*, related to the checkpoints and closures, the increased transportation costs and the difficulties in reaching the schools, depression, and attacks on the teachers and students by the Israeli soldiers. Further, there was pressure on teachers from the Ministry of Education to work with very low salaries. A counselor at the boys' primary school said that many students felt insecure, depressed, and tense, while some parents weren't taking care of their children because of increased travel or work.

Gender

There were conflicting reports on the changes to women's roles during the *Intifada*. According to the mayor of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, economic hardships forced some accelerated restructuring of family and social organizations in the last two years. These changes took place among poorer women in families that did not benefit from remittances, and who therefore sought work outside the home when the men in the household were unemployed. There were conflicting reports on whether women's status had changed. According to the local council leader, women played increasingly important roles in the family and have shared more and more in decision making at home. Still, when it came to "sensitive" issues, such as marriage and travel outside the home, her participation in decision making was still limited. According to the head of the women's organization, however, there were very few women engaged in work outside the home. Most women stayed inside the home or family compound, although they did new often remunerative work such as embroidery. The head of the women's organization did not think that there had been any significant changes to women's role since the *Intifada*, largely because so few women worked outside the home.

One of the most unfortunate aspects of the current crisis was the relative increase in domestic violence, against both children and women.

This problem was not widely discussed or even admitted in public, but was cited by researchers. women resorted to existing family structure for help. In general, however, abusive men were negatively viewed in this community.

Civil Society and Community Building

Groups and Activities Pre-*Intifada*

- Women's Committee - organized to help the social and cultural lives of women. Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya women did not enjoy many of the same privileges as men, including education, partly related to the increasing rate of early marriage. Women's roles in the family were generally not considered equal to their husbands or fathers. The Women's Committee organized projects such as sewing classes, and beautician training and computer classes, with the ultimate goal of helping women to find skilled jobs. It also ran a library, and coordinated swimming outings. The Committee also offered courses about social perspectives on early marriage and on marriage to relatives. The Committee was supported by many local women in part because attending classes allowed them their only opportunities to go out of their homes. The committee is part of the local charitable organization, with some independence from it.

- Al Muntada– an important focus of the lives of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya youth, graduaters. Activities included holding a reception for the students who were to attend university; designing a logo for Al Muntada; receiving an international group in solidarity with Palestinian people during the olive harvest in cooperation with Union of the Agricultural Relief; hosting four cultural nights during Ramadan; and (current) working on a project to plant all main roads with trees.

- The Youth Club- has been established since 1996, its activities halted in the early years of the *Intifada*, related to the limited the freedom of movement and club activities; the emigration of many members of the administrative committee to America; specifically, attacks on the club by Israeli soldiers and the arrest of many youth was the catalyst forcing the club to close.

Groups During the Intifada

Some of the collective groups started during the *Intifada* included:
- a day care center
- electricity and water bill payments – bill payments were collected and delivered by one person, thus saving the others the cost of transportation to Ramallah
- coordinating gift packages to the USA
- committee for conflict resolution
- committee for widening neighborhood streets

The organized bill payment system was the sort of group project that this research set out to explore. It targeted a shared problem – the expense and hassle of getting to Ramallah to pay bills, and shared and thereby greatly reduced the hardship and expense.

A similar community organization was a women's fund-sharing group in the village. In this system, each woman contributed a certain amount of money to a collective pool every month, and then one rotating member would receive the whole amount.

Recent Projects

New needs cited during the *Intifada* were a special clinic for women, especially for childbirth, and an X-ray center. These problems related to the increasingly difficult transportation to health care facilities. No plans were cited for either project.

Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya seemed to have an active local population regarding the organization and maintenance of interim community groups, for the collective payment of bills for example, or the planting of trees. Only some of these groups required money, or related to better financing of money. This was not an obstacle for many Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya residents (but would have been for other village residents). It is possible that the greater economic cushion many Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya residents enjoyed increased interest in community projects.

Another good example of the strength of civil society groups was the committee formed during the building of the four new class rooms and two new schools. The project started in 1998 through a charitable society, which was soon joined by a Parents' Council. One person donated 50,000 NIS, and the project then received support from the local council. This project formed the Committee for Developing and Building Schools. According to a member of this committee, the project was a joint venture between local groups that included the municipality. Another committee was formed with the responsibility of building two new schools.

> *"The committee is open to everybody: people from local organizations, the municipality, the club. The municipality is responsible for leadership and money. The tasks were divided among committee members; some are responsible for the financial and support [signature] issues, others are to follow up the building materials and the rest to follow up the building process on the ground. An engineer was appointed also and all members are responsible for collecting donations. The idea of building the two schools was before the Intifada and after the Intifada people though that we should wait until we have the whole sum of money (Male member of the Committee for Building and Developing Schools; the Parents' Council and the Neighborhood Committee).*

Despite financial problems during the *Intifada*, enough money was raised to keep the project going for a while due to the individual efforts of some of the members, and the concern for the project.

> *"The priority in the village was building the schools because the girls' school was over crowded and needed to be expanded. At the beginning we started with 50,000NIS but now the process is costing millions. We photographed the schools and sent them to the Emirates. Some representatives from there came and we hope they will support us. The projects don't end in the village; when we finish one we start with another and each project needs a committee. I don't think that the Committee for Developing and Building Schools will finish its work because we have other emergency things to do, like rebuilding the wall around the school. There are similarities between the committee's projects, but this committee is organized and has a president and an accountant and all the pictures and the costs of the schools are posted on the internet."* (Male member of the Committed for Building and Developing Schools; the Parents' Council and the Neighborhood Committee, same as above)

Account of support from outside international sources, including the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, points to an interplay between civil society, the state and the economy. In the case of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya that support seemed in keeping with reliance on outside, internationally-funded remittances. It is unclear whether the Emirati support was also coordinated with public outreach, or if it came from individual relationships.

Entrepreneurship

Unlike many of the groups in the other two villages, voluntary groups in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya were largely driven by individual initiative, and were not supported or funded by the political parties, the local council or NGOs. Unlike the groups during the first *Intifada*, which were geared toward nationalist politics, or before this *Intifada*, most of the current needs were financial, a problem people were embarrassed about admitting. This attitude was emphasized in a reluctance to seek help, or to participate in the formation of groups thus required money or capital. Some informal strategies for coping with the crisis involved small groups, and many with an entrepreneurial spirit (documented as a common coping strategy in the 2003 Fafo report). Entrepreneurship shows an important survival

skill, but also demonstrates some movement away from civic group issues, and toward private needs.

One woman, a mother of three children whose husband was unemployed, explained the financial and social constraints on any type of strategies. She and her neighbors had small shops where they sold clothes and food. Their husbands used to work in Israel but lost their jobs due to the siege and closure.

> *"My husband is unemployed and I have 3 children. I work in my house; selling and distributing [food and clothes] in the neighborhood, we have a car for distribution. I shared the work with my neighbor. And we have to go to Jifna to fill the orders. We pay rent for our house and I newly opened a small shop for food after my husband left work. And he helps sometimes. The work was fine at the beginning but after a while other shops opened in the neighborhood. The problem is that we don't have land for planting [vegetables]; we tried to buy a land but we were unable to. We received support from the society and the municipality (food baskets) four times, and once from a workers union in the USA. Nobody supported me or prevented me from opening the shop because it was in my house and I don't go anywhere, so my aim was just to help my husband. Before the Intifada we used to participate in the women's group where we saved money, but I dropped out because there is not enough money. After the war on Iraq, we were deprived of so many things, like buying nice clothes for our children or even buying fruits or desert. The cooperation among people is weak, even among brothers." (Mother of three children whose husband was unemployed)*

This emphasis on private needs conflicted with some villagers' interest in public committee work cited above. Indeed, the most commonly cited issue among entrepreneurs, or those who did not participate in voluntary group projects was financial.

Another entrepreneurial man opened a business with a woman for manufacturing and selling clothing, the success of which indicates a certain amount of spending power among the rest of the population. He noted that, *"Each family has income, either from the man or the women. I work with a woman who sews dresses and I sell them for her [because she takes care of her children]. She asked me to give her material and she would sew them for me. After that, I developed this work and bought sewing machines."*

A civic mindedness existed among village residents that was emphasized in concern for the poorer members of society. This attitude was couched in terms of criticism of the municipality for not doing more to help its citizens. This criticism of the municipality indicated established standards for the role of government, and a close understanding of how particular institutions should be run. There was thus a strong participatory ethic and feeling the state owed the population more.

> *"I believe that in our village there should be no poor or needy families because we receive a lot of money from our relatives in the USA, but…some feel that they shouldn't show that they are in need, and nobody knows about them. Moreover, people who receive a lot of support don't ask to find these people. The problems are solved among the families and relatives; there are some who appeal to the municipality"* *(Man, married with three children)*

This prevalent cultural ethic of civic mindedness existed alongside the politics and economics of the Israeli occupation, the Intifada, the role of the PA and other political bodies. In some cases it was manifested in committee work, such as the Committee for Developing and Building Schools. In general, the public sector was criticized for not assisting for the population in areas that were determined to be the government's responsibility.

For example, a councilor at a girl's school in Ramallah echoed the complaint about the inadequacy of the institutions:

> *"The school has a health committee, which brings nurses, and I select certain cases, and there are lectures on early marriages and on the importance of education. There is no continuity in my work with the cases, which affects my profession and the girls; and due to the secrecy and privacy in the cases it's not easy sometimes to call the parents. I wish I could work full time at the school, but this is a ministry system and they don't care much about counseling; there is a great need for more than one counselor in the school because we have been under occupation for years and we have a lot of problems to be solved. Moreover, the students trust the councilor and they love his/her work."*

Criticism of the PA institutions suggested that informal strategies were all that many people could rely on, partly because the municipality was perceived by some citizens as inadequate in distributing support. Some who engaged in entrepreneurial work justified their forced independence as pride:

> *"We don't go and ask for help from other people; our dignity doesn't allow it. Therefore we resorted to small projects and I thought to use my experience in trade since I was in Brazil with my family and worked with them in trade. I went to Ramallah and bought some clothes to sell in the village. The work is good because women feel free when they buy from me. The income covers the expenses of the house. We don't get any support from anybody. The organization's support is limited and the municipality distributes support to the relatives and friends of its members. But I get support from my brother; he has a car and he helps me in buying the clothes from Ramallah. Moreover, the project succeeded more during the Intifada due to the closures and siege and our good treatment for the customers especially as there are no males in the shop."* *(Woman entrepreneur whose husband is unemployed)*

Perceived unfairness of support was commonly cited as a reason for entrepreneurial activity. This enforced self-reliance related to the group alienation and accounted for the withdrawal from public activity by some citizens. According to one unemployed man:

> *"We tried to ask for support from the workers union but they don't give it to village workers because they see them as dressing well. But I tried to apply to them to help me get money from an Israeli who didn't pay my brother for his work but he brought the police and he didn't pay us (14,000 NIS). I heard about the workers union through the radio and that workers apply for it, but unfortunately the union depends on information from the municipality and the municipality depends on judgment of appearance. And because we don't look like poor people they don't support us, even though they help people who are not in need. We tried to cope with the situation and decrease our expenses, but we have a handicap sister who needs a lot of expenses and needs treatment. The political parties support the village and the municipality and the head of the local council consults them and some people in the village, but they are uneducated. And external effects and passion influence some of the decisions. But there is no hostility among people and everybody participates in sad and happy occasions. The club [al Muntada] is the most important priority in the village because youth have a lot of free time and they have started to have problems."* (Unemployed man who worked in construction and had a handicapped sister.)

It is paradoxical that some feel that the municipality is part of the civil society and encourages partnership and initiative while others feel that the actors of the municipality leads to alienation.

> *"I didn't think of addressing the organizations for support because it is not permanent. And I didn't register in the municipality that I am unemployed, but I registered with the other workers in the workers union and I got health insurance. People cooperate among each other and the rich help the poor. There are no supporting committees that have been formed, however the municipality is responsible for distributing the support. I sometimes hear that the distribution is not fair. There is support from outside, for example from Saudi Arabia, Syria, and from the workers union but mainly the support is from relatives overseas. The municipality's role is not good and people didn't benefit from them except for the roads and the telephone, and this is something they should do. The municipality is the biggest organization where all the problems are solved, especially since there is no police or government. I had a problem regarding my land (some people planted on it with out telling me) and I went to the municipality but they didn't help me. I tried to convince the people to leave my land. But I solved the problem by myself, just as everybody should solve his problem by himself. There are a lot of cases like mine, a lot of people left their lands and other people came and farmed it because they needed to. And people are more often resorting to farming and buying sheep."* (Entrepreneur who opened a restaurant after the factory where he worked closed)

Part of the problem seemed to be the lack of adequate support, despite the occasional assistance. The mayor of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya explained the municipal activities as being constrained by the economic problems of the *Intifada*, but there was also disagreement with the population as to the role of local government:

"The municipality doesn't offer support from its own budget because it only covers its expenses; there are some who demand the municipality become a local council [with more villager participation]. We try to call organizations to get support for unemployed workers and we brought small olive trees to give to people who lost theirs. We try to employ the workers through the Syrian support [where they get 30 NIS a day] but in the village workers won't work for low wages. There are families and even in the municipality members represent their families. Each member knows the needy people in his family and we gave workers the opportunity to register. We used to meet and distribute support for the most needy people, taking into consideration the number of the family members, the work and the income. The subsequent time we give to people who didn't get anything before and we accept anyone after their case has been discussed. But the problem is that the support is not regular." (Mayor of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya)

Criticism of the official institutions for not doing enough to alleviate suffering was consistent with the drive toward independent businesses. While starting one's own business was not a trend unique to this *Intifada*, it was related to a waning group ethic among these informants and to a lack of support from government or other sources.

Group Alienation

Related not only to the conflict, but also to the forced isolation during this period, with many families forced to stay at home for days at a time, was the increased psychological stresses and social tensions. Many women suffered from depression, attributed to constant watching of the news and talking only about the *Intifada*. Children at schools were seen to be more violent by their teachers. According to the local mayor, before the *Intifada*, there were few established mechanisms to address different sorts of depression or anxiety.

As mentioned, there were reports of increased domestic violence. Because of the closures of roads, schools and businesses, more families were forced to stay at home together for prolonged periods of time, and the local cultural perception of gender roles were threatened. There were few recreational activities for children. There were some efforts to address the psychological toll the forced inactivity took on families and individuals. Recent changes included counselors in the schools who were there to talk with students. After school, extra curricular activities, such as special days for drawing and painting for children, and sports competitions held at schools were also geared toward youth. Al Muntada, the youth club, had conducted activities to help address psychological problems for both children and parents, including a summer camp and cultural activities such as nights for discussing poems and novels, parties for the students who finished al Tawjihi (high school), and participating in the projects of the municipality, such as planting the streets and putting numbers on the houses and names on the streets.

Several informants noted a declining of community spirit. Despite the concerns expressed above about caring for the needs of the poor, the greater demands on family survival seemed to push people toward self-preservation. One indication of changing attitudes toward the community was expressed by a woman who became an entrepreneur rather than work with a larger social group. She opened a kindergarten in her home to help increase the family income, and rejected any group involvement: *"The [women's] committee in the village suggested that I work with them but I wanted something for me and at the same*

time to work at home. The Intifada had affected us psychologically and financially. No security, no development or creativity. We used to think of saving money in the banks but now we think of how to cover our daily expenses."

Still, the retreat toward family preservation was also generational. The village council head saw a continuation of the involvement of youth in voluntary groups. He didn't think that the period since Oslo had seen much social structural change since the youth who were active in the first *Intifada* were not recruited to the PA; instead they invested their talents in small projects and new skills, namely the formation of local groups.

One community-wide activity that was increasingly popular was religion. Increased numbers of all groups of people, children, adolescents, adult men and women, were reportedly going to the mosques, either for prayer, or religious courses, which were newly offered. This was thought to be related to the fewer job opportunities, less access to outside villages and venues, and the absence of other community facilities for youth or children. Before the *Intifada*, mainly older generations went to the mosque to pray. The group activity indicated concern for identity, perceived support, and socialization.

Local Conflict

Outright conflict in this community are rare. Some of the local residents had an uneasy relationship with the municipality, partly related to conditioning from years of independence; people paid for many services themselves; 95% of the road repair funding reportedly was from the people, not the municipality.

One such conflict concerned the control over the schools, as the Parent's Council, started in 1992, was very involved in the school with which it was affiliated. The Council was elected, and seen as representative body in the village in the absence of a local council. One male member of the council recounted the uneasy changes in Council-town relations.
.

> *"Before the Intifada there were a lot of problems between the Council [its members in the National Youth Movement] and the school concerning the responsibilities of the Council; it took years of conflict and it developed to threats. Fatah was supporting us in the council and our work took more of political form which made things complicated. [One] Fatah leader tried to force schools to do certain things at the time when the schools were under the Israeli administration, and they used violence against the schools because they were the strongest party; this created enmity in the village even until now. The clear achievement of the Council was building room for the girls' school. The Council dissolved under the occupation; when the PA came the Council was reformed through the schools' administration in which people were appointed for particular periods. As for the current Council, it was formed from organizations and some known people in the village; we had to have elections but then the olive trees were burnt and every body left the meeting. About the difference between the tasks of the Council before and after the Intifada, naturally the Council should be the link between the school and the local community and solve educational problems. For example during the Intifada a lot of teachers were absent and the Council found housing for them for one year. The Council's achievements were materials for students, play grounds and maintenance."*

The older generations who controlled many institutions and the council were reportedly not doing enough in terms of activities for youth. The older members of the village council were not encouraging to new groups. The council was also thought to be conservative regarding mixed gender or secular groups. One researcher reported trying to form a coeducational camp for 1st-4th graders, but this idea was rejected by the local council because the planned camp was coeducational. The council was said to be against Al Muntada, the youth club, because it was secular and coeducational. More religious youth groups were preferred by the council.

There was reportedly more fighting among youth, possibly due to inactivity, frustration and boredom. There were reports of couples separating, although remaining together in the same house.

Conclusion

The history of civil society organizations in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was long and distinguished. The decline was related to economic, political and social factors. Because of the nature of the current *Intifada* and the desperate financial and stressful situations many families faced, as well as the recent difficulties in adjusting to the PA's administration, there seems to be regression in the development of voluntary groups. Conflicts cited among committees and the council related to the residents' perception of the role of local government. In some cases the council did not do enough to help poorer members of the population, and in other cases it went too far in preventing people from forming the kinds of committees they wanted.

Thus group alienation related not only to the *Intifada*'s enforced separation of families, and the constraints of limited incomes, but also to the uneasy relationship with the public sector. The popular ethic of voluntary participation, evident in the voluntary groups and committees organized by local residents prior to the *Intifada* and existing to a limited degree during, was being replaced by entrepreneurship and group alienation. That ethic manifested itself not only in voluntary groups, but also in residents' perceptions of political organs. Thus the decline of voluntary groups was to a large degree indicative of a changing relationship between state/PA and society as much as an *Intifada*-enforced withdrawal from public life.

7.2 AWARTA

Introduction

Awarta lies 8 kilometres southeast of the city of Nablus, in the Nablus district. Located in the north-central section of the West Bank, this is a mountainous and hilly region. Awarta is in the Aqraba/Beita micro-region, which has a total population of 35,000 (CEP Nablus 1995: 7). The population of Awarta is 4,343 (2235 males and 2108 females) (PCBS 1997). People of Awarta had depended lately on the nearby villages of Beita and Aqraba for their food, health care - especially maternal health care and obstetrics - and dentists, as well as sewage disposal. Before the Intifada people visited the village of Al Bathan for entertainment.

 There was near total reliance on Nablus before the *Intifada*. Nablus was the primary commercial and financial center of the West Bank.

The hilly areas of Nablus are among the most important olive processing areas in the West Bank; a large number of the population in the area was engaged in olive pressing.

As of 1995, Awarta compared favorably with other villages in the micro-region regarding infrastructure, but like many nearby villages, lacked a water supply, telecommunications, solid waste disposal, and transportation (paved roads) (CEP Nablus 1995: 12). There have been adjustments to the infrastructure since 1995, including some paved roads, but water supplies and waste management were still problematic.

A study was done in Awarta in 1982 by Ahmad Quareeq, a teacher in the boy's secondery school, entitled "Historical Monuments in Awarta", published in Al Baiader Al Seiasi Magazine, and located at the Al Najah University library. Prior to this study, other residents of Awarta attempted to analyze their village's conditions during the *Intifada*. There were no other books or articles written about Awarta to date, however.

Awarta had a strong history of voluntary groups prior to the *Intifada*, most of which were inactive, mostly related to limited incomes and mobility imposed during the *Intifada*. To some degree, group activity was also challenged by tensions concerning the local government and resident political parties, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Hamas and Fatah. Israeli-enforced closures had led to unemployment and reduced incomes, and there was a severe problem with isolation in Awarta. Increased hopelessness followed the long term economic hardships, and the sometimes tense political situation exacerbated people's alienation from the local government.

Economy

This village was selected for its economic base, which before the *Intifada* centered largely on laborers who commuted to the nearby settlement of Itamar, to Israel, and to the city of Nablus to work. There was some livestock rearing and agriculture, and commerce. There had been a small amount of stores and businesses such as bakeries, car repairs and carpentry shops in Awarta prior to the *Intifada*. These businesses increased partly related to the closures that kept residents restricted to the village and unable to shop in Nablus. The number of local grocery stores rose from 25 to 80 in the last two years, according to local council interviews.

Unemployment rates were very high in Awarta because of the number of workers who had commuted to work before the *Intifada*. Before the Israeli invasion of April 2002, which increased closures and prevented more people from traveling within the West Bank, many from Awarta registered themselves in Nablus as unemployed and received jobs cleaning streets for the very low wage of 30NIS a day.

The Israelis seized ٣,000 dumams of agricultural land from Awarta earlier in the *Intifada*. That land had been used for olive production, and so local farmers also suffered the loss of that income.

Local Leadership

Since the early 1990s, the local council, appointed by the PA, developed its role and local government services increased. According to many residents interviewed, they expected the council to continue that role after the *Intifada*. The other two political parties, Hamas and Fatah, felt the PFLP had monopolized civic roles during the first *Intifada*, and those other parties now enjoyed more popular support.

A local council, appointed by the PA, served the people of Awarta. Beginning in late 2002, the council was comprised of two members from each political group, in addition to one neutral leader, for a total of 7 members. The local council served as a local arbitrator of disputes, and council members were in office for one year. Prior to that, the village had a muktar and a council of elders.

Outside aid to the village, such as from the UNDP, Save the Children or the Red Cross, all came through the local council, although civil organizations received financial support from PARC, a Japanese NGO, the UNDP, Save the Children, the YMCA and the Popular Arts Center.

According to the local PFLP representative, in the last two years, popular Hamas support had increased. Hamas first came to Awarta officially in 1988. It was responsible for a wide variety of social services, including distributing food and clothes; religious classes; visiting the families of prisoners and "martyrs"; and religious celebrations. Hamas also cooperated with some outside institutions to provide the village with services.

Weakened Infrastructure

Much of the hardship in Awarta was directly attributable to the restrictions during the *Intifada*. Road blocks and closures, curfews, and the Israeli military presence – checkpoints – circumscribed life there. Few workers were allowed into Israel to work in the last two years, and the local economy suffered greatly. Medical treatment was limited, and schools frequently closed. As household incomes were sharply down, there was little money to pay school tuitions and utility fees.

According to the head of the local council, the infrastructure problems were mainly water, electricity and sewage. Interim measures were far from adequate. The council head noted that,

Water

People paid for water that was delivered from the nearby village of Beita. The delivery truck was paid for by a Japanese organization. Local residents paid for the water themselves.

> *"The water problem continues, and we are still waiting [the head of Nablus municipality to approve using the well, and for now the people in the village use a movable water tank." (Male, head of local council)*

Some roads had been widened, although many residents complained about their poor condition. Some roads had been paved, but there was a need for agricultural roads to access the fields. There were serious problems with electricity, and some houses had none. The local government's budget was limited, and the reduced spending ability of the local council led to other infrastructural problems, such as the breakdown of many roads that remained unrepaired.

The circumscribed lifestyles of the villagers resulted from the roads closed to other villages where people needed to shop. One of the only remaining governmental offices was the Veterinary Health Department, responsible for inoculating cattle in the village.

The closures meant that there were fewer celebrations, or visits from relatives. There reports of an increase of domestic violence, and no formal institution for women or families to turn to in need.

Education

There were 3 schools in Awarta: 1 primary school for both sexes; 1 secondary school for females, and 1 secondary school for males; in addition there were 2 private kindergartens. In the one primary school, grades 1-3 were coeducational; grades 3-6 were for boys only. There were 561 students, and 20 teachers, 12 from Awarta. The girls' secondary school was for grades 4-12 and had 640 students, 26 teachers, 18 from Nablus. The school facility was built during the Ottoman period, although the local council had more recently built additional rooms. In the boys' secondary school, there were 378 students for grades 6-12. The school was donated by a Norwegian organization. There were 20 teachers, 7 from Awarta there.

AWARTA

Weakened Infrastructure

- Job losses due to closures, check points
- Poor roads
- Problematic water delivery
- Limited sewage facilities
- Less health care
- Electricity shortages

At the girls' high school, the teachers had been absent for 72 days of the last year, although the high school class (*tawjihi*) was not affected because teachers from the nearby villages who could still enter the village taught there. According to the director of the girls' school, the children faced problems, in two cases related to the divorce between parents of students in the girls' school. In addition there were other problems affecting student cited, including 3 cases of disability and 1 case of domestic violence. The director herself addressed many of these problems because there was no professional counselor.

Other problems at the school included the children's poorer academic performance at school. Teachers were frequently absent because of transportation problems in getting to Awarta, parents were not able to pay the school fees, and there was no alternative plan for emergencies, such as the unforeseen prolonged absences of the teachers. Further, the parents did not help the children with their work at home, according to the director. According to the school's director, there were no dropouts this year but in 2002 there were four cases in the ninth grade not officially reported. In the school and in the *tawjihi* class there were two female students who were pregnant, and four students were engaged to be married in the ninth and tenth grade.

Problems at the high school also included a shortage of class rooms and laboratories, deficient funds because students didn't (couldn't) pay the tuition fees, and a lack of teachers. The activities were limited to a morning meeting because the administration wanted to make up for missed days; the five minute break between classes was even cancelled at times to facilitate this. Previous activities included a committee for mothers, but this had been stopped temporarily.

Health Care

There were 2 clinics in Awarta: 1 government clinic and 1 that was part of the Union of Health Care Committees. There were also one private clinic and one pharmacy. But access to medical facilities in Nablus and Ramallah were severely compromised due to road blocks, and facilities in Awarta were not considered sufficient. Many informants cited a need for health care, or an ambulance as a priority in the village.

Sewage

The local council bought land for a dump, and bought a car to transfer garbage to the site. A 9NIS fee was added to electricity bills for this service. Sewage was taken care of by the nearby village of Beita for a fee of 600NIS a month for the entire village. Relations with Beita were already strained, and the sewage problem exacerbated tensions.

The problems in infrastructure were perceived as a failure of the local council and the political parties to deliver services. One man, the head of a large family of 15 members, complained that,

> *"Regarding the services, the political parties distribute the support unfairly, especially health services, so does the old local council. The new council is better in making new roads, but in water and food distribution they are unfair. The water issue is a priority in the village, as is the electricity [network], which is weak and needs to be fixed. I don't like collective work unless I need financial support. In the past cooperation in the village was good, but now everybody minds his own business. If there is a problem we either go to the police or to known people in the village but not the council."*

In general, the hardships experienced in Awarta were much worse than in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, both in terms of incomes lost but also in terms of social services available. Awarta's standard of living was not as good as that in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya prior to the *Intifada*, but the lost incomes and closures circumscribing life in Awarta made villagers isolated and even more dependent on previously weak infrastructure. Thus complaints about the poor services from the local council, and unfair treatment from the political parties for assistance was especially poignant, as the residents had few resources and outside options.

Gender

There were several activities and institutional services offered to women in Awarta, such as the Women's Committee Union, largely dedicated to increasing job opportunities. There were no other reported women's employment options, other than taking in sewing at home. As transportation to Nablus was problematic, this limited the possibility of that work.

According to one informant, *{The role of women was limited during the PA because the support for women organizations has decreased. And in general the role of women is limited except for some cases [where women] run beauty shops and clothes; [but this] is only for economic reasons}* (UNRWA employee).

Constraints imposed on women's activities and movement throughout the village related to "traditional values," according to several informants. While there were women in leadership positions, a pervasive conservatism more generally kept women isolated. These attitudes seemed to have been exacerbated during the *Intifada* as families spent more time together in forced isolation because of closures and lack of employment opportunities. These prolonged enclosures, during times of stress, depression, uncertainty, and humiliation for most members of the families seem to have negative effects on social and family relations. A number of informants believe of domestic violence had increased, no formal reports were filed.

Related to this problem, most social or family issues were addressed by the larger family groups (the clans), which were headed by older men. There were claims of women's education being prioritized in other villages during the *Intifada* (in the face of limited employment opportunities), although this did not come up in Awarta.

Despite some of the setbacks to women's rights and freedoms during the Intifada, however, it was in women's groups that some of the more progressive collective work occurred before the Intifada. According to a teacher in the girls' school, *{the role of women is still limited but there has been progress, especially in education and among married women. Regarding the collective activities among teachers, this year it stopped, [but] they used to have a monthly saving society…the mothers' council is very active socially and it painted the teachers' room from its accoun.}*.

Mixed reports on the effects of the *Intifada* on women indicated different expectations about the goals for women's rights. Many informants indicated that conditions were better for women than they had been, although from a very conservative standard of women's rights. The decrease in public activities in the Women's Committee Union, indicates that the 2000 *Intifada* was much more limited for women's roles, as one informant mentioned.

Group Formation and Community Building

There were many civil society organizations in Awarta prior to the *Intifada*, for charity, labor organizing and educational issues, among others. Many groups were affiliated with a political party, and thus much of the discussion concerning the formation of new voluntary groups concerned the role of the parties. Almost none of the voluntary groups were in operation during the time of the research, adding to the sense of isolation in the village. The political parties continued to deliver services, including food distribution and medical services to residents. According to the parties' members, this service was regardless of the recipients' political affiliation.

Local Groups and Organizations Pre-Intifada

- Awarta Clinic – offered courses on health, first aid; also lectures on diseases (cancer, AIDS), adolescence and early marriage

- Committee for School Renovation – collected funding to repair and refurbish school buildings
- Betterment Committee - started during the first *Intifada*, a committee for village improvements; it stayed effective during the PA period and it still existed during the research period.
- El Zakat – charity and alms, an Islamic tradition codified as a formal organization
- Friends of the Legislative Council – started after Oslo with the goal of setting up better communication between the legislative council's members and the people of Awarta. The group discontinued its work during the current *Intifada*
- Father's Committee and Mother's Committee – geared toward trying to improve the schools and helping them solve the problems between the school administration and the students. The Mother's Committee had painted a school classroom from its own funds
- Karate Club, private club
- Progressive Union for Youth – started in 1996
- Lending society for women – a group started in 1995, the 20 participants were women who paid 25NIS a month, which then increased to 100 NIS until 2002, which one rotating member a month received in full. The women used the money they saved for redecorating their house, and buying new furniture. The group stopped because of the financial stress: some women couldn't make the monthly payments and some women's husbands became unemployed.
- Other Women's Groups – included classes on religion, and Arabic classes for non literate students
- Youth Club – had 630 members, and 9 leaders, 8 from the PFLP and 1 from Fatah; the activities included leasing a building for the club; forming a cultural-social and sport committee; writing a newsletter; collecting books for the library; conducting culture and sport seminars.

The political parties were also responsible for much civic outreach, described below.

PFLP

The PFLP intensified its presence in 1982 in Awarta, and had been a dominant civic organization, particularly during the first *Intifada*. Its role was somewhat lessened with the arrival of the PA and the relative increase in support for Hamas and Fatah. According to a PFLP representative, the group's organizations included:

- Agricultural Committee – built roads connecting agricultural land with the village's main streets to encourage people to work the land and to prevent land confiscations from settlers. The committee opened two roads with support from a Japanese group. In addition, the committee contacted lawyers to defend the village against land confiscation, and helped over 50 farmers farm land, and received endorsement from the Palestinian Hydrological Group to dig 120 wells.
- Electricity Committee – responsible for development and maintenance of the electricity network especially after a plan was submitted to the political parties by the village leaders. The committee used the income from electricity bills to develop other projects like building school class rooms, improving the cemetery, building an area for prayer and rooms for the committee, and buying land to build a container for water.

- Schools Committee – conducted studies on the schools' needs and implemented projects in coordination with the Electricity Committee. It participated in building several classrooms for the boys and girls schools and offered land in some cases.
- Social Committee – maintained an active relationship with village population; encouraged people to support each other through visits to prisoners and injured families and through food baskets donated to needy families. Also donated money for weddings, and assisted in conflict resolution. Performed services such as cleaning the cemetery and the streets, referring the injured or prisoners' families to organizations that could support them or pursue their cases with a lawyer (the support was more moral than financial). These services stopped after the PA and the local council took on those responsibilities.
- Reform Committee – an alternative to the Israeli courts but had no role since the local council was founded. It still worked through the parties to solve certain problems.
- Sports Committee – established a youth union for sports; it was registered with the PA but the union had no office. The union stopped its activities and a new sports committee was formed which conducted activities for youth.
- Workers Union – it existed but had no office because the old council took it over.
- Popular Art Group – a group called (Alshaheed Gassan Awad) used to participate in events inside and outside the village but it stopped due to the *Intifada*.
- Cultural Committee – only functioned for party members, and depended on individual efforts to collect books and exchange them among youth
- Health Services Committee – the committee included other villages in its work and conducted medical services for free on appointed days. In addition, to awareness courses for women on pregnancy, first aid and health, the committee conducted first aid courses in schools for the students in coordination with the Ministry of Education
- Union of Health Committees – helped to build roads to the agricultural land near the village and to replant land. Its role had been restricted to buying olive oil from farmers and conducting courses on olive picking
- Women's Committee Union - conducted literacy and sewing courses for more than 375 working women who paid 20 NIS a month. The union was established in 1989. There were 6 executive committee members and 25 women in the general committee. Activities decreased after the first *Intifada* because of "the coming of the PA and the frustration among the Union members," according to the Union's leader. Previously, the Union participated in many civic activities such as demonstrations, exhibitions and collecting donations. Additionally, the group conducted visits to "martyrs'" families and organized health and educational courses

Hamas

Hamas had been active in civic outreach since its increase popularity in Awarta in 1988. The group reportedly assisted with food aid, and had made ten donations as of January 2003. They also distributed financial assistance to needy families and for families of prisoners, regardless of their political background. The financial assistance came from money collected from party members, outside donations, and from the mosque budget. Further, the group offered medical services and had brought in a medical team and treated 25 cases of psychological therapy for free. They offered help for *tawjihi* class by distributing leaflets and offering private lessons, all for free. Hamas was building a wall for the Awarta elementary school at their expense; widening two roads beside the mosque and

downtown; distributing meat to the needy families during the Al Adha feast; Hamas' civic groups included:

- Reformation Committee – solved social problems such as land dispute and domestic quarrels (divorce)
- Social Committee – visited families of "martyrs" and the prisoners from Hamas. Other prisoners were considered the responsibility of their parties.
- Cultural Committee – conducted activities on national and religious occasions, such as contests during Ramadan; the committee also fixed electronic machines in the schools for free

Future plans included building a new mosque (the third in the village); developing a Zakah Committee in the village; developing a sports club and playgrounds in cooperation with the other parties.

Fatah

Along with Hamas, Fatah had not been very active in Awarta before 1994. the first local council was mainly Fatah, but in the subsequent council, in power during the research, only two members sat on the local council. The PA supported Fatah locally, and seemed to promote affiliation with PA institutions. Fatah worked with the health assistance committees to start free medical service on appointed days; the party also offered treatment for 2 cases for free (the party representative made sure to mention that the cases were chosen on humanitarian bases not political affiliation). The party had approval to build 15-20 water wells; the project was implemented through the local council. Other projects included lectures, one on land confiscation by an invited Parliament member, Dalal Salameh as well as other political figures. Presumably, the connection with the PA afforded Fatah important benefits that could translate well to public outreach. Fatah also had several organizations, including,

- Social Committee – distributed food baskets and support during Ramadan. The support was 60% for the party members and 40% for needy families, "martyrs" and injured families; offered financial assistance to three students.

- Students' Committee – offered courses for free

The Committee for Schools Renovation, the Electricity Committee, the Garbage Committee, and the Betterment Committee were organized under the auspices of the Local Council in 1994.

Different groups had been key to the well-being of residents. Prior to the legal standing the political parties enjoyed in the local council, popular support was earned through committees and donations. Food support, money for weddings, and funerals came from the PFLP. Political groups were still responsible for some of the smaller committees and groups in Awarta before and during the *Intifada,* including the Youth Club (Hamas) and the Women's Committee Union (PFLP), and the Voluntary Work Committee (PFLP), which had many branches, such as labor unions and student unions as well as the Women's Committee. The Voluntary Work Committee discontinued its activities during the current *Intifada*. Committees initiated by the local council included the Committee to Rebuild

Schools. The sharp decrease in voluntary groups in the current *Intifada* seemed to relate as much to conflicts with the PA, or expectations that services would be provided by the new government, as much as the restrictions and hardship during the *Intifada*. In particular, limited resources and increased alienation from the larger public body affected individuals and accounted for some of the decreased impetus to start or join voluntary groups. The types of hardship that Awarta residents experienced were mainly economic, for which there was little relief other than financial assistance from some outside source, or problems with large infrastructure issues such as sewage maintenance, the water supply, electricity networking or health care, problems that were not easily solved by a non-governmental volunteer committee. No civic groups were reported as having started during this *Intifada*, although some established ones continued. In a focus group interview, participants described how they depended on the PA for activities and institutions in the village. The decline in the PA's work and power during the *Intifada* contributed to the inactivity of some organizations, and local people had not reassumed control.

Perceptions of Political Parties

Political affiliation was seen as strongly affecting a family's well being because the parties took care of their members. For example, the unemployment office was considered to favor PFLP members, and each political party was seen to have its own committee for problem solving. Rivalries between the groups reportedly affected how services were maintained. Conflicts between the parties and the local council were common, and seemed to affect the existence and services of voluntary groups. During the *Intifada* there was a greater reliance on the parties, and even more on the local council for assistance. According to one informant, the parties and the local council were both responsible for the weak of public assistance:

> *"The political parties' role is weak and if they have support it depends on favoritism. My son was a Fatah member and he was in prison but they didn't support us in anything and [neither did] the old council. Regarding the local council there were some problems, especially in water distribution. Therefore our priorities are water and an ambulance, since there are no health services after 1 o'clock. Problems are rare in the village, but if there are, I seek out people I know well in the village and not the local council. I like collective work if it serves the general interest, but now it [that sort of work] is rare." (Elder man, father of 6 grown sons)*

There was a psychological component, a sense of deprivation, or envy regarding others' treatment by local council or voluntary groups. The feeling that support was not evenly distributed contributed to individuals' sense of isolation and loss, and alienation from the public community.

Another informant sought assistance from different political and government sources, and also blamed favoritism on her situation:

> *"I get financial support from the El Zakah Committee. I used to get 15 JD a month from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The council gives me money once a year because they give money to people they know. Even the parties don't offer any assistance because they say support is only for party members. And I even have to pay fees at the health center, because I am poor and don't have anybody to help me. I think that the old council was better because now the political parties are in charge at the new one. The assistance they offer only serves council members."* (Married woman with 9 children, messenger)

During the first *Intifada* the PFLP was very active in organizing committees for a variety of services, as mentioned. The current lack of such organizations related to the different socio-political structure under the PA and the problems in working out a relationship between the local council/PA and the civil society organizations.

> *"The PFLP has a number of affiliates but was limited in their services, especially after the PA came; they contributed to the development of the electricity network, and the development of the elementary school. Other parties, such as Fatah and Hamas, are new and don't offer services. Regarding the old council, it didn't work to help the village, it only worked to develop Fatah policies, while other villages at the same time were developing and establishing new [voluntary] organizations. We hope that the new council will be better [and] offer services for the village. The highest priorities for the village are water, agricultural roads for the farmers, developing the electricity network and working on a network for sewage. (Man who was a university graduate, UNRWA employee and president of a local cultural group)*

Criticism of the local council and a feeling that it was not serving its citizens also included those who were well off, indicating a sense that the government, like the parties, was not a public, or democratic service.

> *"The first Intifada didn't affect us economically and even after the PA the situation improved. But today the situation is terrible. The PA used to charge me tax [VAT], and they profited from the workers, as we had to take permits to them, but now everything depends on favoritism. We don't even get a pack of wheat from any party or the council. Instead, the old council made me pay 3500 NIS and three working days for workers to adjust the electricity box for a meter. And when they collect money they always come to me, thinking that I am very rich, and not taking in to consideration the fact that I invested all my money in building my house and my stores. Support is selective and it comes through the local council; they give to the poor and not the rich, while in other villages everybody gets his share. All kinds of services are not fairly distributed, even water, and the village is very poor because it depended on work in Israel. (Man who owns supermarket and used to work in Israel)*

Affiliation with a political party seemed to frame most experiences in Awarta. The local council, the PA or the parties were seen as having power to either thwart or assist in developing activities. For example, the local council wanted to widen a road, but many residents (Fatah supporters) didn't want to give up the land, a total of 10 metres. The mayor appointed three council members, (two from PFLP, one from Hamas), to solve the problem, and the owners of the land were forced to give up the land to widen the street.

> *"Regarding the political parties I don't hear about their services and they aren't visible. The PFLP had support and they distributed [assistance] fairly to members and non members. In addition to that, the party solved some social problems and limited the prices of some products and transportation, but now the party is limited by the PA. And by the way, there is no good political party today and responsible people are not national and don't work. The priorities in the village are the electricity. The old council could have implemented the projects if the political situation [were better]. The health services are also very bad except for the health center for the working committee union. In general we like collective work. As for the problems I first take care of my family and then the PFLP. I believe in women's work and her participation in activities for the village, but for now activities are limited to education and work. Moreover, this Intifada is more militant and there is no space for women's role. As for the other parties, Fatah and Hamas, they don't have any services and if they distribute assistance to members of their party, people don't accept them. Furthermore, they are new." (Man, owner of a store in Nablus and PFLP member)*

The reliance of Awarta residents on assistance made the conflicts and tensions concerning political parties acute. Informants like the man quoted above point to a sort of territorial isolation that party membership brought. Related to the complaints, local reliance on the parties and the local council were considerable, an issue that the head of the local council attributed to the *Intifada*. He predicted that the demands on the council would be deflected to other organizations once the *Intifada* ended. Indeed, the types of services required and offered were mainly economic, or food. The problems with the relationship between the political parties, the local council and the local population were no doubt exacerbated by the current situation and increased tension concerning the much-needed assistance. The uneasy relationship would need to be clarified during a period when the local council's role and abilities were less compromised, and when there were less demands on the council for assistance.

Outside Support in Awarta

The following non-local institutions were working in Awarta and provided support in infrastructure or services. This outside support did not seem to conflict with the existence of voluntary groups, and instead many groups worked in coordination with the outside organizations.

- American Near East Refuge Association (ANERA), which provided the village with 260 tanks of water

- Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PEDCAR), which built class rooms, health departments, and paved roads
- The Palestinian Hydrological Group, which helped the village dig wills and provided plastic tanks for water
- The Red Cross, which provided food, and periodical aid for 240 families. In 2002 the Red Cross donated school bags and stationary to the schools, in addition to periodical assistance of food to the local council to be distributed to the needy.

The local council was widely criticized for not encouraging more foreign and outside assistance to the village.

One new group, that was entrepreneurial and not voluntary, was a sewing workshop that employed women, and had been in operation for a year. The workshop had 13 workers, 10 of whom were from Awarta. Wages were paid daily. The head of the workshop said work suffered during the *Intifada*, but that they had changed business practices. *"Before the Intifada we worked with Israel, but now with Jerusalem and Ramallah. The demand decreased and we face a lot of marketing problems due to difficulties in transportation." (Head of sewing workshop)*

Group Alienation

Like in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, a retreat to family, or to a closer personal circle of associates and friends – a private communal space – was common in Awarta. Many informants cited lack of community spirit, and there seemed to be a defeatedness in discussions of civic organizations. The reliance on family to solve problems was in keeping with the psychological alienation individuals felt from the collective group, and related to the envy and sense of injustice about economic assistance.

> *"I like the collective work and I participate but during this Intifada and due to the bad economical situation I don't because there is no one who cares about the other. If I have a problem I consult my brothers." (Father of 9)*

Some of the alienation related to treatment from the parties or the local council, as indicated below.

> *"There are no problems now but I go to good people in the village [if there are problems]. People used to go to the courts and the PA. I used to participate in collective work but now, I don't believe in it. I used to be member of the mosque committee. [The mosque] was built in 1999, and I was interrogated by the PA about the source of the donations. Since then I don't participate in anything. (Man who owned a supermarket and used to work in Israel)*

The changes to Awarta were profound, in that the civic sense of belonging to a village community, in addition to the material security, was much weaker among many residents.

> *"I don't like collective work unless there is a need for financial support. In the past, cooperation in the village was good but now everybody minds his own business. If there is a problem we either go to the police or to known people in the village but not to the council." (Male head of family of 15)*

Despite the seriousness of the economic situation and the psychological alienation in Awarta, there were also common reports that the Israeli actions were to blame, and thus a sense that the normal functioning of the village was only temporarily suspended.

> *"Projects like the electricity network are good, and important. The spirit of cooperation is there but it needs to be organized by responsible people since voluntary work needs steering and planning; [that work] should focus on the economic issues of the villagers. (Man who was a university graduate, UNRWA employee and president of a local cultural group)*

The evidence that there was strong sense of community involvement in Awarta before the *Intifada* is an indication that there could be again. One significant problem that the *Intifada* raises is the extent to which certain cultural ethics, for example of public activism, could sustain prolonged alienation. Further, the uneasy relationship and unclear roles of the local council and the political parties needs to be worked out so that there is a better understanding of the expected role of government and civic organizations.

Conclusion

Thus, the incursions of winter/spring 2002, the road closures and the limited access to the outside had a debilitating effect on the Awarta community both in terms of incomes and social services, but also on social outreach and community building. Informal organizations that existed before the *Intifada* were largely inactive. The fact that few civic organizations or activities existed was attributed by some informants to the fact that they were concerned they would be required to donate money they didn't have. For example, one of the nursery schools had a leaky roof during the winter of 2002/3 but parents did not organize a committee to repair it because they didn't have the money to contribute.

The few community-wide support organizations, or group projects in Awarta that could replace infrastructure breakdown was partly attributed to established local practices. The local UNRWA worker argued that there was greater hardship in Awarta because of *"the absence of the local projects and labor market and the fact that the people in the village depend on voluntary work and help from friends, especially in agriculture and building; this made people in the village work in Israel, and [so] when they were deprived of work in Israel due to the Intifada [they] had no income, unlike other villages where [there were] local projects."*

Yet this same informant went on to suggest that there were positive effects of the *Intifada* because of people's initiative in the face of a sudden need for new infrastructure. He noted that {*people started to think of new small projects as commercial stores, and women started to work side by side with men [and] people changed their views about women's work and education despite the fact that the reason is purely economic. Moreover, the land and agriculture became important.*} Initially, and perhaps due to such constraints as the political parties' control of finances and community activities, few residents seemed to work alone or in groups to recreate needed infrastructure, as they had in the first *Intifada* and before 2000. Yet with prolonged hardship and forced need, and with little assistance from outside organizations, Awarta residents did respond in limited ways to try to allow their village to function more smoothly again, such as with the sewing initiative, and the

Mother's Council. Most strategies to get by during the Intifada were independent. For example, the closures and shortages forced many people to resort to the traditional methods of making and storing food to adapt to the economic hardship (using wood for heat and baking bread); subsistence gardening, vegetables planted in home gardens.

7.3 AL BURJ

Introduction

The village of Al Burj is located 26 kilometers southwest of Hebron. The region is mountainous and sparsely populated; there is limited arable land in this area due to the limestone landscape(CEP 1995: Al Khalil: 1). Al-Burj is located on the greenline. It is not surrounded by settlements. The entire district population is roughly 390272, and the village population is 1772 (893 females and 879 males) (Palestinian central Bureau of Statistics, Locality type booklet, 1997) . The high number of children broken down according to the 1997 censuses by PCBS is as follows: 280 females from 0 to 6, and 270 males; from 6 to 12 years, 255 females and 245 males. Under the Oslo accords, Al Burj was categorized as Area C, Israeli security and civilian control (unlike Awarta and Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya). This distinction is no longer relevant as Israel has taken over security and civilian control of much of the West Bank.

A local council, established in 1996, existed for local projects and provision of some services, including electricity, water, and road repair. The Al Khalil region is 30 kilometers in diameter, and Hebron is the main commercial center, and contains 35% of the district population as of 1994 (CEP 19995 Al Khalil: 1). The population depended on Hebron, despite its distance, for employment, educational opportunities, and health care. The nearby local towns of Dora and Al Dahrieah were also important to local infrastructure and commerce. Historically, Al Burj with the other Front Line Villages (SFV) are administrated by Dora. Al Dahrieah offered more commercial possibilities, and there was reliable transportation between the two villages before the *Intifada*. The village of Al Burj was relatively isolated, with transportation in and out extremely difficult. Al-Burj has two transportations lines; one goes through Dahrieah which is more accessible and the other one from Al-Burj-SFV-Dora. The researcher needed to arrange her travel to enter the village, and regularly had trouble coming into Ramallah for meetings because of closures, poor roads and checkpoints. The residents of Al Burj claimed themselves more conservative, and the entire Hebron area was supposedly more "traditional" in values and social practices than most other Palestinian areas. But it remained unclear in the research how this was manifested, although this problem was frequently raised in relation to the status of women. Al Burj's conservatism did not seem to pose a severe constraint on the possibilities for community organizing there. Al-burj has a relatively high percentage of education.

While the Al Khalil district's economy was based on agriculture and industry, and there were stone and marble quarrying, and a wide range of manufacturing and processing industries concentrated in Hebron, Al Burj had fewer economic options. Wage labour in Israel and livestock were the dominant economic opportunities. Infrastructure differed greatly between urban and rural areas; many rural areas did not have well kept access roads, adequate water supplies or distribution networks, or electric power (CEP 1995 Al Khalil: 3).

Al Burj is in the Dora micro-region, comprised of 11 communities. Al Burj compared favorably with other communities in the micro-region in terms of infrastructure, but as of 1995 lacked paved access or internal roads, electricity, telecommunications, or solid waste collection (CEP 1995 Al Khalil: 5).

According to the researcher, Al Burj was not "seriously" affected by the *Intifada* partially because it was already somewhat isolated. There were reduced incomes and increased checkpoints, which isolated the village from surrounding West Bank villages, although contact with the Israeli city of Be'er Sheva continued to a large extent. But there were also increased community activities, many started by Hamas as well as by foreign aid institutions. There was a large amount of support from foreign aid groups, which came to the village through affiliation with the local council, a political groups also played a limited role, or some other local organization in Al-burj.

There was reported to be a fair amount of community assistance in informal forms: parents gave money to schools that needed funding and the mosque offered free Quran classes never happened.

There were few informal organizations, and several informal forms of support were initiated by women. Thus there was a certain amount of activity related to civic projects, although with complicated relationships to outside funding and organization.

Economy

Al Burj is near the Green Line, the 1967 border with Israel, and before 2000 most males in Al Burj worked in Israel, although some people, mainly older generations, still worked locally in agriculture. According to the local council head, 70% of the village were workers, 5% were farmers, 15 % were employed by various organizations, and 10% were merchants . Other informants feel that these percentages are inaccurate.

During the *Intifada*, some permits were issued, for a fee, to allow workers over the age of 35 to commute to Israel to work, a change that markedly improved the situation for many. There were forty teachers who commuted from outside the village; one nurse from the village working in the village clinic (2 other nurses from Al Burj worked outside the village). There was 30 % unemployment, mainly among the middle-age men. Again this percentage couldn't be confirmed.

Some people raised cattle, either for their own use, or for trading purposes. Products exported from the village included chickens, agricultural produce, dairy products and sheep products. Some women worked making handicrafts, working in the village and usually in their own homes or the women club building. Many residents were employed by various institutions in the village, including the local council, the Al Burj Youth Club, the Women's Club, and the Rural Center for Sustainable Development (RCSD).

According to many workers interviewed, the *Intifada* severely affected employment, and the situation was deteriorating. The decreased incomes and restricted transportation, particularly for medical facilities made it very difficult for families who lived close to the

margin of poverty in the best of times. Problems ranged from access (transportation was expensive and the checkpoints were difficult to negotiate) to the nature of work with Israel:

> *"The first Intifada was easier [because] we used to work and there weren't foreign workers in Israel and we totally depended on our work in Israel. The situation before the Intifada was better and we could travel and move but today it's very dangerous. And even if you have a permit, it's difficult, and today they don't give permits easily for workers to work in Israel. Even work in the village is rare and connected to Israel. People don't have money to build, so there is even less work. Moreover there is a lot of exploitation. The Israeli suppliers get a lot of money but give the workers very little; before the suppliers begged us to work with them for 200 NIS a day because there was a lot of work, now the worker accepts anything and they cheat [the amount of] working days so they don't have to pay a lot of taxes. We used to complain to the police but now we can't because of the security situation. A lot of us are owed money by the Israeli suppliers but can't get it. Now one has to work in anything, even if it's not his profession." (Man from a focus group conducted among workers)*

There was reduced wages during this *Intifada*, and a sense of frustration in accepting lower rates. According to one source, *"we depend on the work in Israel, and if there is work in Hebron we take half of the price." (Man from a focus group conducted among workers)*

Financial problems were increasingly serious, and without clear signs of relief:

> *"We used to spend all the money we got and didn't count it, but now we are without jobs and we try to decrease expenses. And the problem became how to feed your children because there is no money." (Man from focus group conducted among workers)*

Economic problems led to once-discarded strategies for employment. Some people resorted to agriculture, or to breeding sheep in the face of limited other employment opportunities. Many admitted that if there were job opportunities in the village, they would take them, despite the low wage.

Local Leadership

An early history of local government illustrates the possibility of local demands on participatory government. In the early years of the PA's formation, in 1996, the local PA institution was initially called the 'Projects Committee', and it worked as the local council. A local council was established in November 1997(with 6 men members and one woman). After six months the membership of the council changed , and 7 men were appointed.

Again, there were local problems with the activities of the local council, and a new one was put in place in 2002. Perhaps the most illustrative example of village cooperation and engagement with the public sector was this changeover in the local council

In the new council, a member from each of the seven clans was presented, there were no women on the new council. Al-Talahmeh family has two members. There are families who are not represented.

The council members' relations were considered to be good and decisions were made collectively. The old council had been responsible for the roads and the school. The new council was responsible for 12 cisterns for poor families, the council and the Women's club was responsible for the food basket program for the poor families

The services the local council provided were electricity, water, (and planting trees in the area for beautification.

The council received support from outside organizations operating in Al Burj, which may have inhibited the development of local civic organizations. But the types of assistance were for large scale infrastructure projects, of the type local groups were unlikely to undertake. The council's future projects included building classrooms with assistance from the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PEDCAR) and the UNDP; opening the main road; opening new agricultural roads; and digging five water wells (with the Women's Center). Needed improvements were targeted as: sinking 15 (additional) water cisterns, constructing bus and taxi stands, developing internal roads, planting trees and acquiring a water tank.

Dissatisfaction with the council and the PA, frequently voiced in Al Burj, related in large part to the government's ineffectiveness during the *Intifada*. There seemed to be a general reduction of community participation in public affairs, perhaps in anticipation of a more active government than had existed before, perhaps because of a lack of ability to get things done with limited funding. The disappointment with the local council and the PA also related to perceived corruption, and to frustration with lack of services, an *Intifada*-related complaint.

The council's problems during the *Intifada* ranged from decreased revenue (as people didn't pay water or electricity bills, to an inability to meet the basic needs of the people, including sewage disposal and road maintenance. There was no permanent building for the local council to meet in, although the members rented an office; and the electricity network needed expanding. The electric company was Israeli, and power was weak for houses further away from the village.

The current council seemed to be an important source of support for the village, despite the lack of trust suffered under the previous council. In some cases, families couldn't afford to pay the electricity fees, but in most cases the council helped them out. The council employed people who couldn't pay to clean the streets and perform other work for the council. The council didn't pay these people but paid their electricity bills also this is one of the Women's Club activities in cooperation with the LC. Still, the issue of not paying fees was also locally interpreted as reflecting a lack of respect for the council, and it may have indicated a lack of a civic sense of responsibility, although in many cases not paying the bills may have been lack of sufficient funds. Local relationships to the council were complicated; the PA's presence was welcomed, as the stability, particularly in reference to the pre-Intifada period was highly prized.

Weakened Infrastructure

Many of the problems that affected Al Burj stemmed from the poor economy, closures and poor transportation, which prevented services and individuals from entering and leaving the village.

Health

There were no large health facilities in the village (and hadn't been since 1967, according to respondents in a focus group, there is clinic in Al-burj since the seventies Before the *Intifada*, outside organizations sent doctors in two days a month for free treatments. That service was discontinued six months prior to the start of the second *Intifada*. There was one clinic in the village, and a doctor came twice a week, for a few hours.

The clinic was inadequate to address the village's health needs. The nearest health center was in al **Dahrieah**, and the nearest hospital in Hebron. Private cars transported patients, but for emergencies people called an ambulance to go to the emergency center in al Dahrieah. During closures, it was impossible to get to the next village's medical center. According to a local doctors, the main problem was no health services at night or after 2 pm. There was no pharmacy, but people bought medicine from pharmacies of the around areas like Dahrieah and Dora. A Mother-Child section (in the clinic) had been established to help pregnant women and inoculate children, but it had limited operating hours.

AL BURJ

Weakened Infrastructure:

- No sewage disposal
- No garbage disposal
- Limited telephone service!! The villages is covered
- Limited health facilities level one health clinic
- Problematic transportation
- Limited schooling facilities

There were days when medical care was offered for reduced fees, but they were irregular, only every month or two, or every six months. These services were conducted in cooperation with local organizations like the Youth Club or the Women's Committee, and people paid a nominal fee of 5 or 10 NIS.

Education

There was a good deal of local pride in education, and university degreed individuals were identified as important. Despite the difficulties students and teachers had in getting to school and concentrating, officially, education was emphasized, seeming to form part of a long range, post-*intifida* plan for achievement. This attitude suggested a degree of optimism, or at least not total despair with the current situation.

There was a school for girls and one for boys, and one kindergarten. A new school was being planned. There was a great need for expanding classes, especially for the *tawjihi* (the last year of high school). The illiteracy in the village was about 20%, mostly among older people, according to the local council head more than 200 local students attending

universities, and reportedly there were 105 university graduates in the village, 7 with Master's degrees.

The girls' school had 385 students, and went up to age 12. Until 1990, the school was co-educational up to the third grade. Problems during the last two years included problematic transportation for teachers; many teachers who commuted from outside Al Burj could not reach the school. Books also reached the school late. According to the headmistress, two more students dropped out this year, attributed to: "parental ignorance", or non-valuation of education; sickness; and students' poor grades. The loss of these two students was very upsetting to the teacher. The school had a very limited library collection and a computer center. The headmistress also discussed how the *Intifada* had affected the students psychologically. Yet she also noted that although people were depressed, increasingly, education was prioritized because of the bad economic situation. According to the former head of the local council, "the first *Intifada* had a lot of school dropouts where students left high school and university, but in this second *Intifada,* in spite of it all, we are still insisting on education."

There were 389 students at the boys' school. The school was a liberal arts school, not a science specialty school. Students with high marks went to the science schools. There were two or three students who attended the science specialty school in the nearby town of Dora, and teachers hoped to have a science school in Al Burj. The school went up to age 12, like the girls' school. According to teachers and secretaries at the boys' school, dropout rates were related to students leaving the village to look for work in a nearby villages or in Ber Shiva' (an Israeli city). Early marriage (in the early teens) was cited as increasingly common. Other reasons for dropping out included academic failure, and "ignorance in the family". [Parents of children with low grades tend to take them out so that they could work.] Like the girls' school headmistress, teachers at the boys' school cited a need for a *tawjihi* class, a library. There was a computer lab at the boy's school, but of the 12 computers, 4 were broken and there was no maintenance for them. Teachers complained there were no developmental courses to help them improve their teaching. Other problems included the difficult transportation to the village as not all teachers were local; books not reaching the schools in time, and poor facilities.

Problems with student behavior was inadequately addressed by the existing counselors. One school counselor received 25-30 cases a month, for issues such as poor academic performance or violent behavior. The students were treated for one or two 2 sessions. According to the boys' school headmaster, *"the school has an educational counselor and works on solving problems, but the problem with the counselor is that he is not a professional and students need some one to trust so they can talk about their problems. Instead students come to the administration with their problems. And we try with the teachers to explore the problems because there are a lot of behavior problems and other problems resulting from the family itself."*

The local council head claimed to encourage parents to educate their daughters. The village opened a *tawjihi* class in the girls' school, and there was a free course for female students who failed the *tawjihi.* While girls could theoretically choose between a science or literary course for high school, the science courses were located in another village and parents were often reluctant to send their daughters there because of the transportation costs. Thus even girls with marks high enough to attend science schools were streamed to attend traditional schools Other problems with sending students to nearby villages to study

included the added expense, check points and the presence of Israeli soldiers, which worried parents.

According to the head of the local council, at the time that the PA came in 1994 there were many problems in the schools, in the classes, and with the educational tools. To address these and other educational issues, this man formed the formation of the Parents' Council was the Ministry of Education descion the Parents' Council, responsible for building additional school classrooms, resolving problems between students and the administration, and providing educational tools and facilities (including books). The council consisted of the school headmaster, a teacher from the school and 3 or 4 residents of the village who were popularly chosen. Membership rotated yearly, and according to the head of the village council, they had a good relationship with the local population.

The village council head identified several areas for improvement of infrastructure, as well as social services that could prepare the village better for increased or continued hardship: computer centers and a women 's center to teach handcraft production.

Sewage

Garbage disposal was also a problem. There were inadequate containment facilities, and so people gathered their own garbage and either burned it or buried it and sprayed with insecticides. A similar problem existed with sewage. There was no networked disposal system. Instead, there were close sewage holes: sewage flowed in and when the hole was full the contents were removed open it in land doesn't belong to any one. Fear of water pollution was common, and the Women's Center through the RCSD and OXFAM GB conducted a course on how to test the water in their homes.

Water

Water shortages were a constant problem. The Israeli networked water supply was old and unreliable, and for the past three years water did not reach any village homes. No new houses had water. The problem is not limited with the supply. The sources is problematic.

Communications

Post and telecommunications had minimal services. There is one employee for the mail; there were 150 subscribers to phone lines

Transportation

The transportation to the village was by cars, buses, or private taxis, although informants complained that the fares were often prohibitively expensive.

Group Formation and Community Building

Local Clubs and Organizations Pre Intifada

Clubs performed many needed civic functions and served as an informal help network:

- The Al Burj Youth Club, started in 1994, and licensed in 1996. It was an important resource for activities and community building. The resources mobilized through the Club offered sports and cultural activities, including courses on the *tawjihi,*

folkdancing, workshops, and lectures on such topics as psychological and economic issues in the *Intifada* and women issues. Activities were in coordination with the Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy, and the Civic Forum. The club administration workers were volunteers and the trainers were paid from course fees; other expenses came out of donations. The Youth Club was considered a mostly pro-Fatah club. The Youth Club received funding from the UNDP to build two headquarters, one of which was finished. The Youth Club was popular and also served an important civic role in conflict resolution. Members helped to resolve a clan dispute over farming land by bringing together the two sides to negotiate their differences. Further, the club also helped to develop other social organizations, including the Women's Center.

▪ A Women's Center was started by Palestenian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC), which the club sponsored for 2 years until it became an independent body in 1999. There were 9 volunteers and 250 members, of all ages. The Women's Center offered professional and cultural courses for women, on food preparation and flower arrangements; and offered lectures from outside the village on such topics as health and culture. These stopped in 2002 because of the curfews. Some lectures were given by the Hebron Women's Center for Legal and Social Counseling. PARC sent one of their staff to help the local staff , from the Fawar Refugee Camp. Other services included paving agricultural roads, rebuilding schools and rebuilding wells. Laborers were paid with food, not wages. The Center was also advocating for its own building, and for women members to be appointed to the local council.

RCSD-Palestine (The Rural Center for Sustainable Development) Started in 2000 by five women and six men, all graduates of Birzeit University. Employees at RCSD were from different professional backgrounds, including chemists, agricultural engineers and economists. The board members were also academics from different fields. Initially the center was based on voluntary support, and eventually began receiving foreign and domestic funds for local projects, including from Catholic Relief Services and the Palestinian Hydrology Group, and the UNDP. Courses were also offered in cooperation with local organizations on water issues. In addition, there was one project funded by OXFAM to develop water containers for people, and another project, funded by the UNDP, to offer loans to women to conduct small business projects. To date, thirty families benefited from such projects. The work decreased slightly during the *Intifada*. The center was not politically affiliated with any political party. There was a perceived lack of public trust with the organization because of its newness, and lack of local affiliations.

▪ The Youth Club established a kindergarten, conducted summer camps, and was in the process of establishing a center for the health of pregnant women and for inoculating children. Proposals were submitted to RCSD to request funding for the center. In addition, the club referred some needy cases to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and received a one-time donation. A project for water well restoration was also being planned.

- Al Deia Cultural Center, started in 2001 by the Ministry of Education. Offered computer courses such as on Windows and Word in schools. It also offered courses for secondary students in English, Math and Arabic, and university preparation. It is private center closed in the research period

Local Clubs During the Intifada

There were fewer activities during the *Intifada* and those that existed were smaller in scale. Activities in coordination with the local organizations, such as lectures on political issues and the elections, were reduced because of the difficulty in transportation and the road closures. One workshop that did take place concerned cooperation between local organizations during the *Intifada* and the role of the public in demanding services from organizations.

For the last 10 years, sports activities were hated because the playground is adjacent to a military road. Israeli soldiers would harass young people coming to this playground.
Future Youth Club plans included building a cultural center that would include a library and a computer center, and renovating the first floor of the Youth Club so that gatherings and internal sports activities could be held there.

The most active group in Al Burj was reported to be the Women's Center. The activities and empowerment of women through the center – through courses, work and association – suggested an important improvement in women's status in the village. The center was originally located at one woman's home, and assistance for the club came from a variety of sources, including the local council and PARC. One of the main goals of the center was job skills development for women at a time when many men were out of work. The work the women could participate in, such as embroidery, could be done anywhere, and required minimum infrastructure.

One of the Women's Center's main project was a sewing course. Participants also requested courses in computers; both of these courses were designed with the goal of income generation, and job skills training. There were complaints about the selection process for these sought after courses. Participants were chosen from among the local families by the director, which caused some feelings of discrimination. Advertising for the center came from posters and word of mouth. The center also started a savings club, in which all member donated a monthly sum and one rotating member would receive the entire amount. Some of the other activities were developmental projects, such as raising chicken and sheep, and courses in first aid, courses in sewing, driving, pottery and cooking.

According to one center member, "*the Women's Center conducts a lot of activities, such as first aid, beauty and sewing training courses and has exhibitions of what the girls produce, and a lot was sold. We help the people in the village to market their products despite all the closures and siege. Women from all ages, 15- 65 years old are active in the center and are committed to the work. The center is very important for women since there is no other place where women can meet and talk and work, and there is someone [there] who takes care of their children*".

During the *Intifada* external support increased and because people had extra time during the *Intifada* their visits to the center increased. There was a feeling that even if the *Intifada* ended people would continue to use the center.

As elsewhere, religion was increasing in popularity. According to the local sheikh, this trend started over ten years ago.

> *"After the Intifada broke out people were more committed to religion and the number of people who pray increased a lot. But more specifically, after the Iraq war there were a lot of people (non believers) felt the need for belief, especially among youth. [These people] said that their problems would be solved if they reverted to religion, especially as there were people who didn't pray and died and weren't fully respected. Further, the economic problem is significant and leads people to religion." (Local sheikh)*

Part of the increased popularity of religion also seemed to relate to the active role the mosque played in education and organizing activities. There were many free activities, such as courses and contests where children participated. Parents reportedly pressured children to participate so that they could benefit from courses at the mosque. A new, bigger mosque was being planned, one which would have a section for women. According to the sheikh, many women asked him to start classes, and many people came to him for advice.

Outside Help

One of the issues that made Al Burj different from the other two villages was the amount of outside assistance in the form of aid and relief organizations. Researchers attributed the amount of aid to the outside perception that Al Burj was isolated and in need of assistance. From reports, it seemed that Awarta suffered at least as badly as Al Burj, but did not benefit from the attention and money from outside organizations to keep services continuing. For example, before the *Intifada* most people in Al Burj saw private doctors, something they could not do with the closures. During the *Intifada*, most people received free treatment from an UNRWA doctor, which people in Awarta did not receive. The following organization also worked in Al Burj:

Gender

The Al Burj area was considered more conservative regarding gender roles than the two other areas in the report. It was frequently articulated that Al Burj is "traditional" by informants, and a fair amount of sexism regarding women's social roles was clear in some responses. While the Women's Center proved to be an important resource with potential benefits for the entire community in terms of enrichment of half the population, and increased revenue for entire families, it was seen by some as all women needed to satisfy demands for a public role in the community. For many, the subject of women's empowerment remained within the context of women helping women, or outsiders helping local women. This attitude may also have been related to present, though temporary, conditions of male disempowerment during a time of low employment.

Women also reportedly became more socially active through the Women's Club, and some married women continued their education. The club was reportedly influential in

increasing women's self-awareness. Related to women's work was the problem of day care, which was also newly being addressed with a proposed day care. Women who worked during the Intifada did so usually because their husbands had lost their jobs. This seemed to be more common in poorer families, or was more critical. According to a male employee in local institution.

> "Women in our village don't have the right to decide, for example if she gets married she stays at home and raises her children and she has no opinion on anything. Very few women in the village work out side the house. The Intifada and the difficult situation gave women the opportunity to become educated and to look for jobs. But there is a problem of how to leave the because the family bonds are not as strong as they were before the Intifada. Some women leave their children with their parents and they have to pay sometimes. Therefore, the idea of a day care is very useful and a lot of women will support it even though people are still unhappy about it."

There were conflicting reports from different members of the local populations regarding the changes in women's status in the home related to her work outside the home. Some informants claimed women did not work, or that their roles were still the same in the home. It was not clear the extent to which established gender hierarchies were manifested in men preventing women in their families from seeking work outside the home, or in denying that these women did work outside the home (due to feelings of shame, for example).

The Ministry of Education's decision to allow married women to continue their education was somewhat controversial. The headmistress of the girls' school was against the practice, but there were stories of women who continued their studies or work outside the home despite some prevailing negative attitudes toward this practice. There were many informants who pointed out that women in Al Burj were still employed in traditional female jobs, such as teaching and nursing." The difficulties in continuing education was recounted by one non-traditional student:

> "At the beginning I had problems with people talking about me -especially since I continued my studies at a late age [27] – and because I work in a center where men work, and my field of study [administration] is not suitable for a woman, since women should only be teachers. But my family supports me in my choices. I respect everybody as long as they respect me. There are job opportunities for women but unfortunately the traditions and values prevent her from working since it's taboo for a woman to work from morning till late in the day." (Female student, age 27)

The fact that some values and habits changed despite what women were supposedly "not allowed to do," such as work outside the home, was an indication of the flexibility of some allegedly customary practices. Yet there were challenges in the novelty of having women working outside the home.

Violence against women was frequently mentioned, although it was a very private issue within families. It was not even discussed at the Women's Center, although two or three women were reportedly referred from there to outside help. One woman, a member of the Women's Center, was resigned to some of the "traditional" issues that kept women

unequal, but because of its current source, the *Intifada*: *"Regarding values and traditions, the community in the village is not that committed to old fashioned ways and traditions, although in some sensitive cases, such as honor, robbery or indecent activities, they revert to them. Every woman is subjected to violence, but they don't talk. Either she keeps it to herself or she tries to solve it with her husband, but she never goes to her family's house. Also there are no women who go to the police, otherwise she would be divorced. And all these problems are due to the unemployment of men who stay at home quarrelling with women."*

Women expressed interest in remaining active, despite the closures of more regular work and activities. More reports of women working outside the home surfaced in the end of the research period:

- One woman started three groups of money sharing: with teachers, with her neighbors; and with her daughter's friends. In these groups, one person collects all the other members' salaries one month; the next month, another person collects all while everyone else donates their paychecks.
- One woman reported to have started a money sharing groups within the Women's Club.
- One woman received money from RCSD to start a grocery store
- One woman received money from RCSD to raise chicks
- A bill paying system was started to help defray household expenditures.

Group Alienation

Despite the popularity of the Women's Center, not all perceptions of all local organizations were positive. Workers' perceptions of their support networks were overwhelmingly negative, and they felt neglected by institutional and governmental services. According to one local worker, *"the Worker's Union is very bad and we haven't had any support from them. We pay for health insurance and for transportation to Hebron to the hospital and clinics, and this too much. And if we want to get a permit the Authority takes 100 NIS."*

There were frequent complaints of the competition between the groups regarding services to the local community. The former head of the local council expressed a common frustration with the internal (Palestinian) conflicts in social organizations, *"I wish that all organizations would work together in order to serve the village and stop competing. In all Palestine the organizations are based on political parties and ideologies that affect their work. And in Al Burj these parties influence services when they should be helping the people."*

Problems with unfamiliarity with RCSD led to its not being fully used by the local population. This type of alienation from the village called attention to constraints in local cooperation. While membership in a political party or particular clan could make someone unpalatable to different groups, it also legitimized that person, because he or she had been approved by a familiar and accepted local constituent. Still, the affiliation with the local group isolated individuals within their clan that contradicts with what have been said before. It was mainly within the clans therefore, that cooperative organizing or collective work would most likely occur. That type of clan based activity was more likely to rely on traditional structures of power that tended to be gender and age based hierarchies.

Several local disputes during the last few years highlighted tensions during a time of reduced services. The local council had been replaced because local residents felt that they needed more openness and accountability as I said before the replacement happened as result of conflict of interest between Fateh members. Decision making practices changed as a result of people taking responsibility for their government. Some of these disputes were resolved in positive ways, although there was some concern that residents would still not support the legitimacy of the new local council and withhold electricity bill payments.

The former head of the local council was concerned about social cohesion, noting that, *"Stability is one important factor for development. When the PA was there people felt this stability and there was development, and we wish for this stability again and to work together."*

There were some cases of individual cooperation, such as one man who owned a store and went daily to Al Dahreah to buy goods. He volunteered to bring telephone bill payments for people and some entrusted him with paying their bills. He did not get paid for his help.

In general, there were many complaints about the favoritism showed by the support organizations, the local council, and RCSD. One man, owner of a grocery store, was bitter about the conflicts.

> *"…There are no [political] parties in the clubs and what is more important, they are not family based. The problem is in the political leadership. Ending the Intifada is not for us to solve, or workers going back to work in Israel. The leadership doesn't have any political plans or programs. The Intifada has been going on for 3 years, [and] did any one of the leaders suggest a solution?" (Male shop owner, age 33, married, no children)*

In a focus group conducted with several families, some participants declared that there was an on-going struggle between the organizations and the people regarding the distribution of support, and who was targeted for aid. There was a strong feeling of bias regarding the distribution. The RCSD was also seen as selective, only offering cisterns to its members, when many people needed them. There was a frustration regarding whom to direct complaints to. The conflicts between the political parties were seen as ongoing. Participants wanted monitoring over the local organizations and responsible people, with a village committee to maintain accountability.

Many complained about the lack of good social cohesion as a result of the crisis. Indeed, the weakened family and social relations was partially blamed on the absence of familiar rituals that assisted in the development of those ties, such as gift giving at weddings. Social relations were strained with few if any opportunities to build up good will. Prior to the *Intifada*, large amounts of money and gifts were reportedly shared. But because people had so few resources or disposable income, sharing 50 NIS was considered significant, and financially draining. There were reportedly fewer family visits because people were unable to buy gifts for each other, which was a customary greeting with relatives. People were more withdrawn socially, and social relations had deteriorated. There was less empathy and more family quarrels.

Unlike in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya or Awarta, where a retreat to family, or to a closer personal circle of associates and friends - a private communal space – informants in Al Burj commented mainly on the alienation from family. Family was still cited as the most important resource for conflict resolution, however. There was less of a defeatedness in discussing civic organizations as some projects had been successful. But as in the other villages, the psychological alienation individuals felt from the collective group related to the envy and sense of injustice about economic assistance from RCSD and the local council. In many places it was reported that the people are satisfied with the new local council.

In contrast to most other reports, according to the local council head, social relations improved during the *Intifada*. He noted that *"The Intifada changed things; [there is] more solidarity and cooperation among the people, [and] people are more dependant on the land and animals...in addition to that, more people are interested in education"*. In general, people were unable to maintain normal family communication and forms of exchange due to lack of income, as well as transportation problems. These additional stresses compounded the frustration and humiliation inflicted by shortages and difficulties in almost every aspect of living.

Conclusions

There was a mixed sense of solidarity in Al Burj. The Women's Center stands out as an important source of support and assistance. But perceptions of favoritm (which presumably predated the *Intifada*, and were exacerbated by it) limited people's willingness to participate, and contributed to a sense of alienation from others because individual and family hardship was so preoccupying. Families who had sick husbands or handicapped children were particularly stressed because normal sources of support and income were so heavily depended upon and had either evaporated or were substantially reduced. There was less of an economic cushion for these poorer families, and managing daily care was exhausting and uncertain.

The alleged conservatism of Al Burj was somewhat evident, although often more in theory than practice. The conservativeness was identified by informants in the values and traditions: people supported each other, and there was a great deal of community solidarity among the villagers, and women generally did not work outside the home, or if they did they were teachers. Indeed, issues regarding conservativeness, and reliance on tribal customs seemed largely related to disputes. The local council was sought out for financial help, but the extended families were consulted for major domestic disputes.

The conservativeness was also thought to be evident in the limited roles for women's employment outside the home (or even inside it). Still, several women attended courses to learn skills for employment, and many continued their educations. The constraints undoubtedly did exist for many women, but it did not exist for all women in all ways.

Frustration with the infrastructure, and the political structure was evident in the dependency on and frustration with local government. The local council and the Women's Center were cited by one source as the best organizations in the village, but there was also frustration with the PA leadership. There was local pride and hope in the new council, and pride that civic action had organized the replacement of an unsatisfactory group. The

RCSD played an important role also, it had invested 150000$ in one year in community development. It expanded its activities to nearly villages.

Accounts of individual or collectively initiated projects, for commercial enterprises, or for the mother-child center for example floundered for lack of funding. The initiative was there, but respondents' frustrations with their inability to pay back project loans was cited as a reason for not continuing the work. Thus the difficulties in that sort of organizing made it not worthwhile, despite the willingness of participants.

8. *Overall Conclusions*

There were few civil society organizations newly created or in operation in the villages considered in this study. Many existing ones that were active, particularly Al Muntada in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, the unions and political parties in Awarta, and the Women's Center in Al Burj, predated this *Intifada*. Their activities were limited, although they continued to try to serve the population with the available support of participating members. Several reasons are suggested for this trend. Constraints on the operation, and on the establishment of other similar groups seemed to be largely financial, as locals could not afford to share their severely limited resources and public institutions did not have funds to give out to local projects. Alienation from the larger community, depression, and anxiety were also cited as common, with the understandable consequence that participation in civic groups was not sought out as much ad before the Intifada. Many of the problems in the villages (checkpoints, closures, inadequate electricity grids and sewage disposal) also required power or resources usually unavailable to local groups.

A third reason was the changing relationship to the local governments. Local governments, and the PA itself, having only been established in the 1990s, were still working out a satisfactory relationship with residents. Charges by residents of government corruption, or inadequacy were not uncommon, as were lack of trust in the fairness of the local government and its ability to help the populations. In Al Burj, local disapproval and action led to the election of a new council. Local residents expected assistance from the local council or from the political parties, and indeed many families were receiving financial aid from the government, although it was usually not considered sufficient. This public dependency on the relatively newly established local governments seemed related to the lack of spontaneous groups forming to address some of the infrastructural problems. A growing inertia, related to the financial dependency, the group alienation and the psychological anxieties of the *Intifada*, affected ability and willingness to participate in civic groups. Many respondents depended on the local councils to supply the funding and support for infrastructure. Additional work and forming of groups related to the availability of outside funding and support, because resources were so strained. Most villagers had a problematic relationship with the local council and the PA as these organizations were frequently seen as new or inadequate. An imposed inertia existed – partly related to expectations that more services would come from the local councils, and not having those services delivered and not doing, or not being able to do much about it.

The unusual circumstances of this *Intifada*, where economic and infrastructure problems predominated, contributed to the lack of fully active civil society organizations. Lack of funds, lack of mobility, and lack of access to outside sources of support were important reasons for the types and range of local organizations. Problems with lost resources or infrastructure, such as a case in Awarta where a delivery man's truck was crushed by the Israelis, where he had no hope of compensation, were particularly severe because no one else was financially secure enough to loan him money to buy another car. There seemed to be a local determination to live normal comfortable lives; most wanted organizations that helped them financially, to resume a normal life. This research did not explore attitudes of resistance or political organizing, but overwhelmingly respondents seemed saddened by their personal situations, angry about the conflict, and angry at the PA and the local councils for not solving the *Intifada* and making their lives better, and above all angry at the occupation.

The issue of local attitudes toward civil society in Palestine today cannot be fully understood without also understanding the role of the PA and local councils. Commonly characterized as a dependent proto-state formation, the PA's ability to govern is tied because it has no independence, no sovereignty, and the economy is so totally dependent on Israel. Many of the economic problems were due to (and blamed on) Israeli closures and the Israeli sanctions that limited or prohibited smoother functioning of the established labour relationship between the two societies. The escalating tension, anxiety and frustration during this *Intifada* left many alienated from the community and unable to participate in community organizations. But a perception that the centralized and local governments were not doing enough to help, combined with the sometimes debatable legitimacy of the local governments also contributed to public alienation from the community and thus involvement in civic projects.

Despite the existence of a great number of organizations started by political parties, there was more group alienation in Awarta, and the community strategies seemed to be fewer there than in the other villages. The economic situation was very bad, there was little outside assistance, and the isolation appeared to be greater. The differences between Awarta, Al Burj, and Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya were largely economic. Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya's economic base, while suffering, did not change dramatically, as Awarta's did. In Al Burj, which suffered economically due to restrictions to travel to Israel, there was a higher level of functioning possibly related to the assistance from outside organizations, and partly perhaps due to the already isolated nature of the population. But Awarta was a village largely dependent on its neighbors: Palestinian cities and villages for facilities such as health care, shopping and entertainment, and Nablus and Israel for work. While some stores replaced the ones that were not available because of the closures, there seemed to be little the village residents could do given its resources. There was thus little organizing and strategizing done that was publicly available to address the widespread suffering.

The long term possibilities of the alienated conditions in Awarta did not seem likely. There had been a higher number of community organizations that were temporarily unable to function because of the severity of the Israeli occupation. Thus it seemed likely that these groups and that type of activity could one day resume if the economic situation and the mobility of residents were to improve. Awarta's situation seemed uniquely bad because of the imposed isolation: the village needed support and free flow of people and goods with outside villages. Emotionally, socially and culturally the residents were at a severe disadvantage because they had been so cut off. Adding to locals' frustration was a sense that the conflicts between the political parties did not serve their own interests. After the *Intifada* either a stronger local council would need to emerge to oversee civic projects, or there would need to be a more equitable distribution of power and resources among the political groups, or the political groups would maintain control and remain in conflict with the local council and the local population.

The environment in these West Bank communities, while ostensibly conducive to the formation of civil society organizations, upon closer examination was more stressful and alienating to group activism. Further, the decrease in civil society organizations, and the changes in the communities, including alienation, increased entrepreneurship, more women working, more dependency on the local governments for support, shows a varied picture of West Bank experiences during this crisis. The variation among villages in civil society

groupings related in part to the different economic well being and freedom of movement. Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya residents were empowered to a large extent, and that village and Al Burj had the most reported informal groups organized for self help. There had been a great deal of collective activity prior to this *Intifada*. But most importantly, the residents felt empowered to organize themselves in informal ways to confront the collective hardship experienced during the *Intifada*. The economic cushion most residents enjoyed in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya allowed them to bring resources, though certainly strained during these times, to many projects.

Yet a key change in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya was the increase in entrepreneurial activity side -by- side with more community-oriented projects. The cultural ethic of voluntary participation so common before the *Intifada* was threatened by the increased alienation from the group as families and individuals struggled to maintain their own standards of living. This change seemed related to the relationship with the local government and the PA. The village residents had been more dependent on PA institutions before they were cut off by closures and curfews, and the increasing tension with the local council further alienated locals from the government and thus by extension, the local community. Individuals formed smaller groups for commercial enterprises, and families withdrew unto themselves. The frustration that the government was not providing enough services, combined with a lack of trust in that same government seemed to exacerbate this trend. This didn't prevent the formation of community oriented groups. In fact, a number of groups were formed in various areas of concern.

The political climate was also an important determining factor in whether and to what extent the village communities participated in civic organizations. A frequently mentioned constraint on groups was political affiliation. In Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya the social issues that were divisive, such as the generation gap and the older council members' rejection of the youth club, were politically motivated. There was an active local population, and a critical future issue is the type of relationship between the local council and civic organizations. In Awarta, the PFLP was seen as dominating the infrastructure development and formal support networks. In addition to the many practical limitations, there was also a local culture of inactivity, and a sense of powerlessness, which stymied the possibilities of informal support and resource building networks. In Al Burj, the council was seen as active, but individuals received enough outside support to start some organizations of their own. The fact that the council worked in conjunction with these groups was a good sign for future, post-*Intifada* society where civic organizations could continue under an equally strong local government. Perceptions of favoritism in Al Burj relating to the political parties still existed, however, and as in Awarta, perceptions of the power of those parties merely served to further disenfranchise and alienate the populations.

It was this difference in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya groups that led to the conclusion that their more widely available resources contributed to the local formation of support groups. It was not that issues of favoritism did not exist in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, but a significant amount of the population was financially secure. These residents of Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya were empowered, and able to initiate committees and action groups to fulfill particular needs. It was not enough to have the desire or need to form groups, as this was common in the other villages. But without the support and funding, those groups would not have been able to form. The organizations in Awarta and Al Burj set up to help youth and students were of a different sort – very useful and especially needed, but often organized with the local support of a political party.

A formal organization, although not necessarily a formal legal structure, was often a requirement for collective action. Clubs and unions in all villages organized services to the poor, classes for women, or other community programs. This could be problematic, however, since the formal institution in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, the local council, resisted certain youth programs. Most activity was evident among women, in organizing classes and sharing money. This was particularly striking in Al Burj, which was reportedly more conservative. Yet more women not only worked outside the home, but also organized collective activities for each other. It was possibly the involvement of outside organizations, as well as the initiative of women themselves, that led to the formation of this sort of empowering group despite the area's professed conservatism.

Future coordination of civil society groups and centralized state organization would depend on the legitimacy of the state and a social investment in the public good, and a sense that responsibility and participation by the people could be rewarding.

Local cultural issues contribute to different environments conducive to the formation or development of civil society groups. One significant problem that the *Intifada* raises is the extent to which certain cultural ethics, for example public activism, could sustain prolonged alienation common in the communities studied. The spirit of Turner's communitas was evident in some ways, but not evenly. Some civil society organizations provided some services where possible. But the more strongly shared experience was alienation. Community members did share the transitional, liminal experience not only of the *Intifada,* but also of the awkward movement toward a nationally unifying government that so far had not worked out the type of democratic ideology or practices it may or may not espouse. The increase in religiousness in these communities did not seem to point toward a growing Islamist tendency in politics, but the strength of the sheikhs and mosques, not to mention Hamas in serving the community at a time when the government often comes up short in assistance may continue after the *Intifada* ends. Again, the local governments and the PA need to establish a clearer set of services, obligations and policies – some of this possible only once the *Intifada* ends - to the local population to avoid the frustrations being currently experienced. In this way the possibilities for civil society are more positive.

Further, this research shows a variety of local distinctions between and among the communities studied, suggesting that there are many differences within Palestinian society that need to be recognized in terms of how communal formations do or do not develop. Economic and political differences were obviously important, as discussed above, to the potential formation of civil society organizations. While poverty is not considered to be a deterrent to the formation of local groups, in the case of the villages studied, the needs of the population were mainly financial, or for large infrastructure projects, and thus the types of groups were either assistance oriented, as in Awarta's numerous examples of food or financial aid from the political parties, or the initial rationale for Al Burj's Women's Center, or based on a stronger financial foundation, as some of the local groups in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya were.

The possibility for long term change thus depended on the types of organizations and the projects undertaken. There were several areas for potential cultural changes. In Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya, and at Al Burj's Women's Center, for example, poorer women were trained in

job skills because their husbands were out of work. There might be corresponding changes in attitudes toward women's work outside the home, or perhaps a dependency on this income that will continue even when men are working again. But it is far from clear that women would want or be allowed to continue working once employment opportunities for men improved. Cultural prohibitions could well have been suspended during the economic crisis the *Intifada* presented, but were not necessarily gone. Another case involved the control the local council in Al Mazra'a al Sharqiya exerted on the youth club. The council was so far successful in restricting activities, but the generation gap is likely to widen with the continued return of residents from overseas and the increasing power younger generations will eventually exert on local politics.

Cultural change - in attitudes and local structures - involves many variables, including but not restricted to outside pressures. One critical social issue in the *Intifada* that has been very problematic is the disempowerment of men, the emasculation related to loss of jobs, humiliation and powerless in the face of Israeli military activity, and the destruction of property and psychological, financial, and cultural well being. The increase in domestic violence was partially attributed to this. It would therefore seem possible that with the return of economic opportunities and a more stable community and family life, that there could be a resurgence of male pride and a refusal to allow women to continue working outside the home, or indeed enjoying the social freedoms more common in the *Intifada*. Further research on family attitudes toward women's work outside the home would need to be conducted to ascertain the likelihood of this more negative scenario for women's rights. There was a strong cultural value of helping others, and many informants professed support for collective work, although they did not all participate in it. The number and variety of civic organizations, particularly before the *Intifada*, and the initiative demonstrated by the few who were able to successfully organize clubs points to the established ethic of civil society organizing. The duration of the *Intifada*, and the amount of hardships inflicted over an indeterminate amount of time will surely affect the strength and continuation of this ethic. More importantly, however, and as discussed above, the transitional nature of civil society organizations in these Palestinian villages depends in large part on the future relationship with the local and national governments. Issues such as regulation of the local organizations, autonomy of the local governments as well as the local organizations, and clearer demarcation of government and non-governmental responsibilities will create a healthier space more conducive to a vibrant civil society.

APPENDIX: Research Questions

Research Questions from workshop with researchers and research assistants. Issues specific to each village were addressed in subsequent meetings.

What are the conditions of the groups organized to mobilize resources?
Who organized it? How?
Who joined the group?
Is it sustainable?
Will it or could it stay in place after the Intifada ends?

Methods to remember:
* Look for specific experiences, and get lots of examples
* Get exact quotations, dates and numbers from your sources, don't just remember general statements
* Distinguish between what's been done by the local village and what help came from outside the village
* Follow up on as many cases of institution building as you can; you should have stories and statistics for each case you know of
* Re-interview people if necessary, more than that if need be. Make sure you get their story right
* Distinguish between institutions organized in relation to the Intifada (for example, the IDF destroyed water infrastructure, so water is imported by locals) and those needs which were created by other shortages or crises not specifically related to the Intifada

Important data fields: research on these topics should be as detailed as possible
Of the institutions that you have identified as being formed since this Intifada, describe how they were formed:
When were they first planned
What was the planning process, such as:
Who started it?
How did other individuals in the group become involved?
What were the challenges the group faced?
How did the group overcome those early challenges?
Also: problems in organizing, locating resources, maintaining the system

What are perceived as the greatest public needs in the village? (infrastructure (for water, sewage management, etc.), transportation, education, etc.)
Level of infrastructure before September 2000
Areas of local conflict
Local needs (what is needed that local resource management/institution building can NOT fix?)

Issues
Distinguish between resource mobilization on a one time only basis, and that which has lasted for a long period of time (a few months, for example) and that which continues.

Pre-Intifada structure of the village: what were the municipal services then, how did the village work together. Consider issues that might influence cooperation: was there a large gap in incomes, was the village cohesive? How much cooperation was there among families? Was cooperation organized by neighborhood? What did the group work on together?

Get the history of specific institutions; if possible, get oral histories of individual experiences during this Intifada, also, get examples of how a family as a unit has worked during the Intifada.

Are there any municipal activities that exist; are there any recreational activities where families come together, such as to watch television, or for holidays, for meals, to talk?

Think of the project as the recent history of a village; get relevant information about the economy, clan issues, changes in social organization

Bibliography

Abu Ghazaleh, Adnan. 1972. "Arab Cultural Nationalism in Palestine during the British Mandate." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1(3): 37-63.

Aras, Bulent and M. Lutfullah Karaman. 2002. "Civil Society Under the Hegemony of the State: Notes on Selected Middle Eastern Countries." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 25(2):1-11.

Egger, Philippe. 1992. "Rural Organizations and Infrastructure Projects: Social Investment Comes Before Material Investment." *International Labour Review* 131(1): 45-61.

Esposito, John. L. 2000. "Islam and Civil Society." European University Institute Working Papers RSC 57, Badia Fiesolana, San Domenico, Italy.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books: HarperCollins. 4-30.

Gotham, Kevin Fox. 1999. "Political Opportunity, Community Identity and the Emergence of a Local Anti-Expressway Movement." *Social Problems* 26(3): 332-354.

Hammami, Rema, Jamil Hilal, and Salim Tamari. 2001. "Civil Society and Governance in Palestine." European University Institute Working Paper RSC No. 36. Badia Fiesolana, San Domenico, Italy.

Honneland, Geri. 1999. "Co-management and Communities in the Barents Sea Fisheries." *Human Organization* 58(4): 397-404.

Jones, Doug. 2000. "Nepotism and Human Kinship." *Cultural Anthropology* 51(5): 779-800; 806-809.

Khalaf, Issa. 1991. *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Lesch, Ann Mosely. 1979. *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Muslih, Muhammad. 1993. "Palestinian Civil Society." *Middle East Journal* 47(2): 24-274.

Ndiaye, Serigne M. 1999. "Promoting Rural Community Development in Africa: State vs Grassroots Organizations." *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 24 (10):65-91.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1965. "The Sociology of Primitive Exchange." In *The Relevance of Models in Social Anthropology* M. Banton, ed. Pp. 139-236. London: Tavistock.

Sletten, Pal and Jon Pedersen. 2003. "Coping with Conflict. Palestinian Communities Two Years into the Intifada." Fafo-report 408. Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies. Norway: Centraltrykkerriet AS.

Turner, Victor. 1982. *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications.

Weinberger, Katinka and Johannes Paul Jutting. 2001. "Women and Participation in Local Organizations: Conditions and Constraints." *World Development* 29(8): 1391-1404.

World Bank 2002. "Fifteen Months – Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment." Working Paper. 24931. March.

World Bank. 2003a. "Twenty-seven months - Intifada, Closures, and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment, Vol. 1 of 1." May.

World Bank. 2003b. "World Bank Report on Impact of *Intifada*, Vol. 1 of 1. *West Bank and Gaza Update*. April-June.

Zoubir, Yahia H. "The Failure of the Authoritarian Developmentalist Regimes and the Emergence of Radical Protest Movemetns in the Middle East and Africa: The Case of Algeria." *Journal of Third World Studies* 13: 127-184.