ON- / OFF-SCREEN: RESEARCHING FILM PRODUCTION

The case of women educating their children on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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Abstract

This article describes how an analysis of the creative process of participatory filmmaking has been used to gather data on political priorities and highlight evidence of sensitive issues. The methodology described had as its final goal the creation of a documentary film. However, the scientific analysis also took into consideration each step from the first idea to the final presentation of the film. As such, it looked at what finally appeared on screen as well as what was excluded from the final content and it observed the social interactions around these decisions. The interest in the mechanisms and relationships that led to the final narrative of the film lies in the possibility of extending knowledge about how a social environment influences and interacts with the creation of a filmic narrative. This attains particular relevance because the research was conducted in a setting of ongoing conflict, which included a case study from within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Keywords: *participatory video; women and conflict; Israel; Palestine*

Introduction

When making films we collect a great deal of material that will not make it to the final version: material *Off-screen* that goes far beyond what we see *On-screen*. However, as this article will explain, material excluded from a film provides interesting insights into the motivations and intentions that stood behind these creative decisions. For the purpose of the present research, a documentary film production was established in order to find out how a creative process interacts with the social surrounding in the particular context of an ongoing conflict. How does a creative process come to mirror political priorities and conflicts of interest about what should be put forward into the public realm of film?

As an empirical case study, a group of Israeli and Palestinian women were invited to create a filmic essay answering the following question: How do you explain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to your children? While the method of participatory filmmaking produced a 90minute documentary film, the focus of the scientific analysis was not on the film but explored the creative process around it. The issue at stake evolved around the question of how a creative process can be used to report on how narratives of conflict are being negotiated and in which way the individual woman is in a position to push for her own version of the representation of her views.

Speaking of the creative process as the main focus calls for the clarification of the different stages of this process as well as for the definition of the term *creative*. Scientific discourse on creativity recognizes the term creative to designate a *product*, a *process* or a person's *way of thinking* as *new* or *original* (Mumford, 2003). Regarding technical innovations, a further characteristic of creative as being *useful* is added. From an anthropological perspective it becomes apparent that such definitions of what is new or original and useful are related not

only to culture-specific norms and values but also to the specific environments from which they arise. In economies that build on capitalist thinking, for example, *creative thinking* as a catalyst for innovation is appreciated, while it may be less admired in other contexts. The question of whether a cultural context appreciates or sanctions creativity, which in its negative case may not even be referred to in that way, is discussed in anthropological debates on the dialectic of innovation and tradition (e.g. Turner 1963, Liep 2001, Robbins 2010).

For the specific case of this documentary, we will apply a relatively broad definition of a *creative product* and its *creative process*, meaning the creation of something new and with no preceding existence. The aspect of usefulness will be excluded from the definition of a creative product since the product itself – the film – still has a life of its own yet to be discovered in the future. Instead of asking: «Is it creative in the sense of original, new and useful?», we will ask «How does a creative process take place that allows for the production of something new and original, which will be the finished documentary film?». Hence, our interest lies foremost in the nature of the creation process and the way it relates to its social embeddedness.

Although the different stages of a creative process are under debate, there is a commonly accepted observation that the way to a creative product does not occur in a straight line nor does it develop linearly. Furthermore, it is being influenced by its environment (Amabile, 1996). A creative process involves the overcoming of obstacles and moments of stagnation, in other words problem solving. The measure of creative thinking happening throughout a creative process can be traced by observing multiple, divergent approaches and reframing goals to take account of the envisioned content (Guilford, 1950). In the case of documentary filmmaking, this includes selection and exclusion of content at various stages of the production as well as interacting with the social surroundings. While avoiding a normative evaluation, such observations give evidence of inner motivations and momentum of leadership when other people are being won over the envisioned purpose and representation.

The creative process in the present research entails the drafting, writing, producing, filming and editing of a documentary film. The general approach taken to filmmaking fits under the premises of *participatory filmmaking*. However, the degree of participation varied throughout the creative process and relationships need characterization, as will be further explained later in this article. As a whole, the creative process will be observed not only regarding the filmmaking and the parts deriving from and leading to it, but also in the way that creative thinking took place when dealing with problem solving in the wake of responding to obstacles during the production. Operating on the basis of a case study gives a specific example of how such analysis and monitoring can be put to work. As such, the case study allows the production of specific content and knowledge about how women educate their children about conflict as well as giving an account on what happens if they start putting together a public statement about it. As critics of participatory video have described, the method does not provide a mimetic reflection of peoples' lives (Cooke and Kothari 2001) but annihilates a series of power relations (Guijit and Kaul Shah 1998), and the research adopts these concerns as a source for knowledge creation. Self-representation through participatory video in a context of conflict automatically becomes an issue that goes beyond the contribution of the individual. In the case of women thinking about their role as mothers, it becomes automatically a family issue as the children and relatives will appear in the film. Further, public statements on the ongoing conflict will have to be balanced with the current general sensitivities of the conflict.

The rationale underlying this research focus is the perception of conflict resolution as a change process, which requires the re-orientation of established thinking patterns and problem solving. In an extension of political negotiations, making and implementing peace requires the re-thinking of the current *status quo* on all levels of society. Through self-guided re-formulation of narratives, new pathways become accessible and more importantly, also acceptable. The idea of reformulating narratives is not new to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its numerous political movements and initiatives that have aimed to look at the past and present situation in a different manner. Finally, it has been the essence of numerous scientific works that have been produced on this conflict to counterbalance predominant beliefs and confront them with their scientific evidence. For the present case, however, the aim was to gather knowledge about the way in which the current narratives come together, their inherent relationships and their potential to empower research partners based on collaborative action-research. The research outcome will provide a basis on which re-evaluation, re-thinking and re-framing of narratives of conflict can be built. As such, the written analysis complements the documentary filmic part.

The scope of this article will be to explain how a creative process was designed and empirically applied to fulfill the described research goals. By December 2012 the process of editing the final cut was almost complete; the article will thus focus on the steps taken up to this point.

In addition to the preceding overview, the article consists of the following parts:

— *Sections 2 and 3* provide an introduction to the empirical case study and the role of motherhood in the political discourse within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

— *Sections 4 and 5* explain how the process of documentary filmmaking can be assessed with a focus on creative decisions that are made during production.

— *Section 6* will conclude by giving a few examples of how priorities and sensitive issues can be detected with such an approach.

Mothering in political discourse

The role of women in peacemaking and conflict resolution has been studied from a range of perspectives. Feminist scholars have criticized the essentialist construction of characteristics associated with women and men (e.g. Cockburn 1998; Enloe 1990) throughout the general discourse on war and gender[1]. Essentialist is defined in this context as approaches in which gender differences are not only associated with biology but expanded to certain social and emotional behavior as a given condition. The majority of the literature associates war with men and women with peace. Masculinity is thus clearly assigned to the military, violence and aggression. Women, on the other hand, are afforded the role of victims during wartime[2] and peacemakers in the aftermath of conflict. However, recent experience has shown that women are also involved in wars as combatants (e.g. Moser and Clark 2001; Parashar 2009).

Setting aside gender stereotypes of the victimized, peaceful woman and the aggressive male warrior, women have also become active in their role as mothers within both peacemaking and conflict. However there have been very few scientific studies of the role of individual mothers in fostering peace or conflict that are separated from their participation in political movements and activism. Partly this may be due to the fact that motherhood was traditionally associated with the private sphere, and thus has been viewed as of limited relevance to peace and conflict resolution.

The term *mother* here describes a woman who has given birth or who has full custody and responsibility for a child. While the association of the biological female genitor with «the mother» does not apply to all cultural or social contexts, referring to the Israeli and the Palestinian society it is a commonly understood idea of «the mother». Moreover, the role, which is executed by a woman towards her child, can take the shape of an ideological concept, which refers to a normative, behavioral designation of the mother. In more recent feminist writing, motherhood is understood as enacting a role similar to the concept of performing gender (Butler 1990): «mother› is best understood as a verb, as something one does» (Chandler 1998). It has thus become commonplace to speak of *mothering* instead of suggesting a fixed practice of motherhood. Seen from this perspective, ideas of motherhood (as opposed to mothering) imply a unique gendered role that goes beyond the biological processes of conception, pregnancy and birth. For the sake of clarity, the present article will use the term mothering to name the individual practice and refer to motherhood as an ideological concept.

Women in their role as mothers are understood as neither exclusively belonging to the so-called private nor to the public space, but as a dynamic actor who moves within and between different social spaces. The challenge of the selected methodological approach is thus to bring out the movement back and forth between a family's intimacy and the different levels of public space as they affect the woman in her educational practice. In this way the genesis of each woman's personal vision of the conflict is considered, as well as relevant aspects of collective political discourse to which she relates. It will be further distinguished between a woman's personal point of view and the way she narrates the conflict to her children in her role as a mother and also by the way in which she chooses to talk about her practice in consideration of the public eye.

In the Israeli and Palestinian context ‹the mother› has been part of the political debate on both sides. The first and second intifada placed much emphasis on the role of Palestinian mothers' support of the national interest. Palestinian women as ‹mothers of the nation› embodied «steadfastness and cultural continuity associated with the Palestinian national liberation front and the warmth, care and compassion associated with motherhood» (Sharoni 1997: 150). Nahla Abdo explains that «the construction of motherhood equals nationhood within the Palestinian context emerged as an expression of Palestinian lived reality. Expulsion from the homeland and refugeeism in foreign territories provided the impetus for the mother-nation relationship» (Abdo 1991: 25). The perception of Palestine as

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[1] «War» in the meaning of violent conflict between nation states or within a national territory.

[2] Clearly, women constitute the largest group among civilians affected by war (Resolution 1325 on the «Inclusion of Women in Peace and Security Issues» released by the Security Council of the United Nations in 2000, www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf).

a virgin changed into the image of a mother through the experience of expulsion. While the land of Palestine is described as the mother, the real mothers are compared to land.

Similarly for Zionists, the land of Palestine was both a mother and a virgin: «As a Virgin, the Zionists needed to fertilize and fecundate her. The result of this pregnancy was to be the birth of the ‹New Jews›, the Israeli Jews of the post-Holocaust, post-Independence era, in contrast to the feminine Diaspora Jews who walked into the gas chambers without a fight» (Mabuchi, 2003). The fact that Judaism is passed on through the mother adds to her privileged position in birthing the new nation. Geula Cohen, founder of the right-wing Tehiya Party described the condition of Jewish mothers in Israel thus: «The Israeli woman is a wife and mother in Israel, and therefore it is her *nature* to be a soldier, a wife of a soldier, a sister of a soldier. This is her reserve duty. She is continually in military service» (Hazleton 1977: 63). While women have been part of the Israeli Defense Forces since the beginning of the state of Israel, it was always emphasized that pregnant women and mothers were exempted from military service (Izraeli 2009). Finally, its demographic landscape and thus women's willingness to give birth is a key issue in Israeli politics: in the past few years the Israeli Government has been preoccupied with monitoring the rising number of births among Israeli Arabs[3] (www1.cbs.gov.il), which in 2009 accounted for almost 20% of the Israeli population (ibid.). At the same time, birth rates in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) are higher than in Israel.

What can be observed from this summary is that nationalist discourses on motherhood creates a stereotype of the mother as being equal to the woman as an individual. Little or no differentiation is being made between a woman's individual point of view and behavior and her sustained ways of acting through her role as a mother. However, when approaching the empiric reality of researching motherhood, stating this difference is essential.

Researching Mothering through film production

Researching private space, especially the one inhabited by a mother and child, requires a great deal of tact and mutual respect, which can be best achieved when the woman participates in the research process. Through women's self-assessment of their mothering it was explored how they themselves understand their role in educating their children about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in the process rendering them from being objects to subjects of study. Hence, the methodological design is in part based on the concepts of action research. «Action research is [...] not so much a methodology as an orientation to inquiry that seeks to create participative communities of inquiry…» (Reason and Bradbury 2008: 3).

The sample was framed in a way that is relevant to both parties in the conflict. Characteristics included: a woman whose children are between the ages of five and ten, experience of direct exposure to conflict, the age of the woman being above 25 years, her multi-cultural background or family ties abroad and professional education, all of which enabled her to come into contact with people beyond her immediate surroundings.

The research scenario of co-producing a documentary film was specifically created to provide a platform of activities through which women could show what is particularly relevant for them while ultimately developing a creative product. The general view that seems to have emerged from recent debates in anthropology favors the idea of people performing culture rather than simply informing about it (e.g. Fabian 1990). Having said this, we need to consider the possibility that the contents of the final film may not be what women regard as most important for educating their children but is more likely linked to a certain image they want to display in public. As such, it is acknowledged that different levels of publicity call for different self-representation.

The methodological focus on film production helps to locate the mothers within a set of delimited influences. Being conscious of the impact of seeing oneself in a film, the process of film production involves a strong emphasis on, and responsiveness to, incorporating a participant's feedback and any desire they may have to change their self-representation. These dynamics of intervention and feedback are generated throughout the creative process, and provide, in themselves, data on what a participant considers is apt for publication on film and what may not be said. Accordingly, this approach can help us to assess potential differences between a mother's vision of the conflict in the private sphere and what she may express publicly on film, confronting an, as yet, unknown audience. Also, by being able to influence the editing and filming of their recordings, participants have the opportunity to carefully consider and express their views, and so include a process of self-reflection in the development of their narrative.

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[3] As a result, there are numerous initiatives to establish relationships between young Jews overseas, particularly in the United States, and «the home country of the Jews» (Katz 2008). Organizations such as ‹Birthright› (www.birthrightisrael.com) invite groups of young people to visit Israel. Guides from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), men and women, who are among the same peer group, mostly lead these trips

Researching film production

Visual anthropology has produced a series of texts and films[4] which endorse the use of visual or audio-visual media in order to extend the possibilities of written research. Film, for instance, has been seen as a way of communicating non-verbal information in a much more direct and coherent way through the coincidene of sound and images. On the other hand, researchers acknowledge that film can communicate very differently which has been extended by the discourse on the ethical and etymological grounds of participatory filmmaking (e.g. Elder 1995, Lunch and Lunch 2006, Ruby 1991, White 2003).

However, the perspective of the present research takes a slightly different angle as it undertakes a specific analysis of the content produced during the overall process of film production regarding the relationships, social interactions and political motivations that had an impact on the creative process. As

The camera had to wait outside because people felt uncomfortable with showing that Israeli and Palestinian children go to school together. (**Photo:** Sonja Schenkel)

from the written text, rather than weighing one against the other. Beyond assessing audio-visual modalities of research documentation, filmmakers have reflected upon their position vis-à-vis the filmed, the selective dynamics of using a camera or the creation of an additional level of ‹reality› through film (e.g. Crawford 1992). Regarding the gathering of data with filmic means based on a collaboration and feedback between the anthropologist and the participants, Jean Rouch has initiated the practice and coined the term of *Cine-Ethnography*,

such it goes beyond Cine-Ethnography but does limit itself to episodes in direct relationship with the film production. An van Dienderen (2007), who did exactly such an analysis has looked at the different stages and dynamics of a particular film production, albeit one that she herself did not become involved with as a filmmaker. Waite and Conn (2011) explored the topic of sexual health in Uganda through participatory video and applied theater. Their research gives reference to power relationships as they emerged through symbolic enacting of scenes

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[4] The term film in this article includes the use of video material.

from women's daily lives. Dealing with such a sensitive topic, their approach involved re-enacting real life episodes instead of direct participation by the people concerned.

Combining *participatory filmmaking* with a specific analysis of how the creative process takes place, gives access to data that would otherwise have remained hidden. In stating this, a few things need to be said about the definition of *film production*. First of all, the term *film* does not indicate that we are only dealing with filmic aspects. The process of filmmaking is understood as a communicative, creative and technical process that gives access to data that extend beyond the final visual product and includes preparatory meetings, script development, correspondence and other written notes, interaction with the surroundings during the filming and changes demanded during all stages of production until the final editing. By analyzing the process of film production the focus includes content, context and different modalities of expression such as the oral, written or filmed. Furthermore, by deliberately using a participatory approach to filmmaking, the research participants share in the decision-making process and become closely involved in the making of the visual product; it follows that very different choices, preferences and censorship are also being considered.

Distribution of Roles

Participatory filmmaking obviously suggests active participation, perhaps even an equal or nearly equal contribution to the process of filmmaking. The term also implies a particular relationship between the filmmaker and the filmed, but what exactly is the relationship between the filmmaker and the filmed? What was the nature of the contribution of each party to the creative process?

When discussing participatory filmmaking, some researchers define the term as participants influencing the content (e.g. the Fogo Processus[5]), while others have trained participants to make their own films (e.g. Sherr Klein & Hénault 1969). Visual anthropology has applied participatory filmmaking or participatory video in a number of ways while also considering the cultural-specific aesthetics of the participants. This may begin with the way the material is filmed through passing the camera around, or it may incorporate a shared editing process. Finally, there is a key question of whose story the film (MacDougall, 1991) actually tells and how anthropologist-filmmakers position themselves within the filmic research. Sarah Kindon (2003) explores how to deal with these power relationships and suggests thinking of participatory research as speaking *along* rather than *for* a particular group of people. In the present case, the distribution of roles was such that only the creation process of the participatory video, but not its subsequent analysis, qualified as participatory.

In my[6] approach to participatory filmmaking, I drew on my experience of producing corporate and institutional films. Making a film for a client implies a hierarchy in which the filmmaker tries to meet the communicative goal of the client. The specificity herein is that the client is usually unacquainted with the working methods of the media. The filmmaker thus has to mediate between the particular possibilities and limits of this visual media and the client's point of view. This process of mediation is worked out, for instance, by writing what are called *shooting scripts* which detail more or less precisely what will be filmed. Depending on the amount of control that a client wants to exert, a script may even foresee what the chief executive officer of a company may say and so on. For this research, I used this knowledge of how to make a film for someone else whose views may not coincide with or may even contradict my own. Each participant was given the same amount of screen time[7] to develop a segment on their point of view. My role was to help them to identify the issues that were most relevant to them, give technical support by doing the camera work, and organizing the editing. Finally, I set up the introduction and closure to the film. As a result, the final film will be co-owned by the participating women and myself. In a formal sense we will be co-authors of the film, but in practical terms I tried to maintain a strict hierarchy by only focusing on how women's views could be brought onto the screen. Of course, I am not trying to claim that the film produced emerged solely from the women's initiative. To produce this film was my idea, though I tried to show their story within their respective segments and I followed each of their requests regarding filming and editing. Since they chose the places and people to film, most of the production on location happened under their lead. I also sustain the point of view that even though the participating women did not physically witness the editing process, they had editorial power given the necessary condition of their consent, pre-approved editing scripts and extensive discussions on subtext and dramaturgical structures, which will be further explained in this article.

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[5] The Fogo process was initiated in 1967 by Don Snowden, and took place among ten remote fishing communities on Fogo Island, Canada. Through the method of filmmaking the communities engaged in a visual dialogue and thus generated ways of improving economic collaboration on the island.

[6] In the following paragraphs, the text will use the pronouns «I» to refer to the researcher and author of this article and ‹we› as in the community of the researcher and the participants.

[7] Screen time means the amount of time that they may occupy in the final film.

My own role as a researcher and filmmaker was two-fold: on the one hand, I acted as a technical facilitator by filming and organizing the editing of the film. On the other hand as a researcher I had my eye on what would make it onto screen and on what would be left out. A, I paid close attention to the fabric of the social relationships and interactions that had an impact on the final film.

The research process

Our collaboration took place on several levels moving from the private space to public exposure: first, we started with a narrative interview, which revolved around a number of topics that were the same for all of the women participating. I then invited the woman to read the transcript of the interview and to comment on it or to correct it.

When approaching the filmic process, the main thing was to support the participants with my knowledge and experience whilst not interfering with their creativity. Previous experience with participatory filmmaking has shown that one of the biggest challenges for people within and outside of filmmaking is to establish a coherent dramaturgy within their narrative. Single episodes may work as stand-alone pieces, but how can this be edited into a whole segment of 20 to 25 minutes? Thus in a second step I asked the women to reflect on the research topic by writing a letter to their children. The women were encouraged to select whatever they regarded as relevant to explain to their children about the way they were being educated about the conflict. The written letter works as an off-voice narration, which the women read in front of the camera. Alterations and amendments continued until participants were happy with their version of the letter.

In a further step, the women envisioned how this written letter could be turned into a filmed documentary. Following their lead, we looked for echoes and reflections of their writing in «real life». The scientific gain is that the search for images which are suitable for display in a documentary film involves accessing much additional data, including complex aspects of an ideal self-representation or projected constraints imposed by the family's opinion or the public eye. On one occasion, a woman thought about how to show her family's traumatic past in the Holocaust since she had briefly mentioned this in her letter. Thinking about a proper visualization suddenly brought to the fore many more aspects of her family history which had not been mentioned before. The search for adequate images thus

led to a moment of her reflecting upon the available anecdotes, memories and visual references. When finally deciding upon a certain representation, the woman considered not only her own views but also what she expected her family would think and finally what she wanted her children to retain from telling the story. In other words, what can be seen *On-Screen* is just a fraction of the overall episode.

During production, which also happened under the women's lead, we encountered more direct feedback from their immediate surroundings, as people reacted positively or negatively to the fact that the participating woman wanted them to appear in her film. After the filming the edited version of the film was changed until the woman was happy with it and agreed to show her portrait in public.

The choice of what to include in a film involves an evaluation of how something can be shown and to whom. Aspects that are not included in the film come in a range of modalities, both explicit and implicit. In order to increase the women's control of the implicit meaning of the film, *subtext protocols* were established. This meant that the visual content of the images was distinguished from the implicit message that was created through the editing, sounds and music. The order and pace of sequences in relation to the off-voice and how they influence one another were discussed with the women. As such, there is no objective reading of a film's emotional quality. Yet double-checking the anticipated message and declaring ways of reading the filmic subtext should provide a way of offering a conscious reflection on how the film ‹could› be understood by a future audience.

In the course of the editing process it became apparent which parts of the letters contained a different dramaturgy to the filmic storytelling. In collaboration with an editor, who brought a fresh look to the material, the separate films were compiled according to the shooting scripts. In collaboration with the editor I also proposed an *editing script*, through which the order of storytelling could become more «filmic», for example through an unfolding structure of conflict, climax and resolution, and reviewed the emerging narrative structure with the participating women. Further, a series of files were submitted to the women asking whether they wanted them to be shown with the original sound instead of being acoustically covered by the reading of the letter. This included, among other things, a woman showing and explaining the separation wall to her children and a father showing his son their family's pre-1967 land beyond the Green Line[8].

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[8] The Green Line refers to the line set out in the 1949 Armistice Agreement after the 1948 Israeli-Arab war.

By December 2012 we had nearly finished the final cut. The final film will start with an introduction, followed by the four produced films and a closing chapter. So far, although I did mentioned the «existence» of the other participants, I have avoided initiating any contact especially between the two conflicting parties, ensuring that the films will not evolve around a dialogue but represent a separate account of each woman's reality.

As a last step, I will present the whole film to each woman separately. Following these showings, an evaluation through an anonymous online questionnaire will take place with the intention that feedback may come out more critically than through a face-to-face feedback. In conclusion, the film will be shown to peer groups that include women with a similar profile to the research sample. Their feedback and points of view will in turn be considered for the discussion of results. The whole process can be summarized as follows:

— Preparatory interview

— Women write a letter

— Creative meetings to visualize the letter

— First shooting script

— Feedback

— Embedding changes and further versions

— Final script

— Filming and simultaneous changes

— Editing according to script

— Suggestion of dramaturgical changes and subtext protocol

— Selection of extra footage by the participants

— Presentation of rough cut

— Rough cut feedback and discussion of subtext protocol

— Changes, maybe additional filming

— Fine cut

— Feedback

— Last changes and final cut

— Screening of all films

— Process evaluation

Preferred and avoided content

During production, and as mentioned before, the women encountered pressures from their social surroundings as to what and how things should be shown on film. At the same time, there were moments of insistence, we may call them moments of agency, when they did not just give in and adapt to the views imposed by their surroundings but found a way to create a filmic scene in their own way in spite of the opposition.

Scholars of visual research have invested a great deal of time and effort in highlighting the relevance of the «world around the visual» (e.g. Banks, 2001), stressing its entanglement with social relations; the context through which a film emerges not only influences visual representation – the exchange goes two ways. Which media conventions and expectations regarding an envisioned audience play a role when entering the stage of public media?

On one occasion here, a woman set strong emphasis on teaching her daughters about Islam. Every week she takes them to attend a special school where they learn to recite the Koran. As she wanted to include this in the film she called the school to obtain permission. The night before filming she checked again and found out that the school had called every parent, so that they would tell their daughters to cover their hair especially for the occasion. The woman was furious since she had particularly selected the school for its traditional approach to Islam, which, according to her view, does not specify that women and girls necessarily have to veil themselves. Contrary to the school's view of how to project a ‹proper image› to an outsider, the woman insisted that the girls would not arrive with their hair covered and again called all the parents. The following day, none of the girls came in veiled. Her act proved not only her agency but worked as a momentum of leadership through convincing parents and the school on her behalf.

When moving from the private interview to the written letter and finally to the documentary film, some women switched from primarily addressing their children to considering «what the world» needed to know. Hence their account of motherhood became far more political when entering the public stage. This took place though explicitly talking about certain incidents or by avoiding them and thus making an implicit state-

Showing nature and scenic beauty was one of the main requests for the film to explain childrens' daily life in a Westbank settlement. (**Photo:** Sonja Schenkel)

duction the researcher's eye was repeatedly allowed to see certain things which the public eye – as embodied by the camera – was not allowed to record. As such, the consequences of a filmed account were perceived as reaching farther than written scientific research documentation. However, the challenge, especially in view of the small sample, will be to include such evidence of sensitive issues into the final analysis without revealing their origin.

Conclusion

Dynamics of intervention and feedback are being constantly generated throughout the creative process of film production. They provide, in themselves, data on what a participant considers relevant and apt for publication on film or on what may not be publicly said. Accordingly, this approach highlights potential differences between a mother's vision of the conflict as articulated in the private sphere and what she may want to be expressed publicly. Carefully considering their views in the development of their narrative encourages self-reflection and a momentum of taking over leadership or adapting to demands coming from their social surroundings.

ment. A woman living in a West Bank settlement, for example, at first talked about serious incidents of violence in the letter to her children but then excluded it from the filming. While talking in private brought about evidence of violent confrontations, her filmic narration is almost entirely focused on the ‹quiet life› of nature and touches on the subject just to underline how this was a «natural» aspect of the children's world given that they have been exposed to it from an early age. In other words, making a statement about the quietness of a place in the midst of disputed territory has an implicit political meaning.

Insights regarding preferred and avoided content could be found by comparing the initial interview with the different versions of the letter, and by noting changes made during the production process up to the final editing. Furthermore, at certain moments the women insisted on including a scene and found ways to overcome opposition that were revealing, and finally, it was observed how becoming conscious of the public quality of the media changed their choice of content. As a consequence, more sensitive issues became apparent. This happened, for example, through explicit censorship coming from a Palestinian husband who feared the political consequences of a particular statement; this was then not included in the film. On another occasion an Israeli mother said that her daughter should not appear on film together with Palestinian girls because it might give a wrong impression of close contact – despite the fact that the girls went to the same school.

These ethnographic accounts give insights into politics / strategies of self-representation and how audio-visual representations differ from the lived reality. During film pro-

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