



Existence is Resistance  Building resilience in the South Hebron Hills



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the theoretical underpinnings of the research trip, detailing the three strands of the adopted model; Locus of Control, Perceptions of Social Capital and Perceptions of Environment and Culture. The importance of these three different concepts is explained in the context of the situation in South Hebron.

The next section, Overview of the Research Trip, gives a brief history of the two villages visited; At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir, as well as the approaches taken in the research. The fourth section, details the Key Observations recorded during the trip, breaking them down in nine sections that detail the concepts that underpin the resilience of the local inhabitants. The nine observations are Education, Home Attachment, Activism, Livelihoods, Environment, Community Cohesion, Connection, Art and Communication and Moments of Exception.

The fifth section, Implication of Findings, expands on the observations, comparing them with the theoretical conceptions examined before embarking on the trip. The final section, Moving Forward, connects the implications drawn with the larger context, as well as explaining more of the Building Sumud Project's plans for future projects in the region.



As part of the Building Sumud Project's (BSP) ongoing work in the Hebron Area, a group of eleven researchers visited two villages in the South Hebron Hills for ten days in April. This report, divided into six principal sections, details the trip, its findings and their implications. The first section, Context, gives a general overview of the Hebron region as well as a history of the work the Building Sumud Project has undertaken in the Old City of Hebron.

The second section, Defining Resilience, explains



Executive summary	1	4.6 Community cohesion	18
Contents	3	4.7 Connections	20
Glossary	3	4.8 Art & communication	20
1. Context	5	4.9 Moments of exception	20
1.1 South Hebron Hills	5	5. Implications of findings	21
1.2 Background of project	6	5.1 Home and place attachment	21
2. Defining resilience	7	5.2 Symbolic violence	21
2.1 Locus of control	7	5.3 Social capital	22
2.2 Perceptions of social capital	8	5.4 Outcomes	22
2.3 Perceptions of environment and culture	9	6. Moving Forward	23
Education in Occupied Palestine	9	6.1 Creating a hub	23
3. Overview of research trip	11	6.2 Enhancing local capacities	23
3.1 Locus of control	11	6.3 Advocacy and lobbying	24
3.2 Perceptions of social capital	12	6.4 Emphasising symbolic violence	24
Listening to People	14		
4. Key observations	15		
4.1 Education & Children	16		
4.2 Home attachment	16		
4.3 Activism	16		
4.4 Livelihoods	18		
4.5 Environment	18		

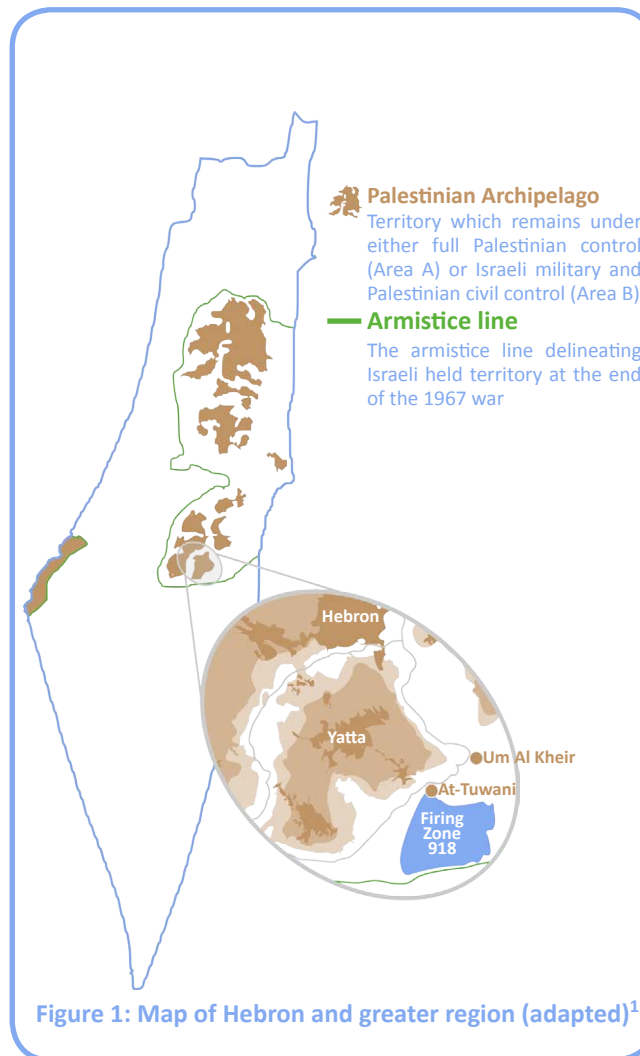
BSP	Building Sumud Project
CERAR	Centre for Study and Action Research on Resilience
HIRN	Hebron International Resource Network
ICA	Israeli Civil Authority
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PA	Palestinian Authority
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction



1.1 South Hebron Hills

Since the 1993 Oslo Accords, land within the West Bank has been divided into three separate areas, A, B and C. While this was initially intended to be a temporary measure that would allow a gradual transfer of power from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) to the Palestinian Authority (PA), negotiations broke down in 2002, with the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Area A is under full control of the Palestinian authorities; while Area B is under Palestinian civil authority with Israeli security measures in place and Area C is under total Israeli civil and military control. Much of the South Hebron Hills, which is in the southern West Bank, is in Area C. Under the agreement made as part of the Oslo Peace Process, this area is under full Israeli civil and military control and it contains a 'closed military area', called "Firing Zone 918". The map, shown in [FIGURE 1](#), shows the location of the villages of At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir in the South Hebron Hills, as well as the location of the South Hebron Hills in the greater region.

Residents of some areas of the South Hebron Hills have been ordered to evacuate, stripping of them of their legal status and evicting them from their ancestral home, with which they feel a strong sense of place attachment. The local people face



eviction and limitations on their freedom to work their land, tend their livestock, build their homes and educate their children. Both of the villages visited, At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir, are in Area C and both are adjacent to Israeli government approved settlements, Ma'on and Carmel, respectively. For Palestinians living in the area, construction without a master plan approved by the Israeli authorities is illegal and it is very difficult to secure a master plan. Any illegal construction is liable to demolition by the Israeli army. While Israeli settlements often start as illegal construction on Palestinian owned land over time the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, has given greater recognition to the settlements over time, allowing them to expand further, encroaching on Palestinian territory. While demolition orders are also served on settlement buildings, they are rarely enforced, and anecdotal evidence suggests that any time demolition orders are served on settlement buildings, the Israeli authority greatly cracks down on the Palestinians in the immediate aftermath.

The predominant local livelihoods are sheep and goat herding as well as some limited farming. The South Hebron hills, close to the Negev desert, have very low annual rainfall. While the Israeli settlements have access to water for irrigation, water access for Palestinians is very restricted.

[1] B'TSELEM, 2012. Map of South Hebron Hills. [pdf] Adapted from at: https://www.btselem.org/download/2012_south_hebron_hills_map.pdf [Accessed 21st March 2014].

1.2 Background of project

The Building Sumud Project (BSP) is an action driven research initiative that focuses on the impact of the occupation of space and the means of resilience adopted in response by the inhabitants of the Old City of Hebron and the South Hebron Hills. This project is derived from a 2010 initiative launched by Oxford Brookes University, in conjunction with the University Paris Est, Utrecht University and Bethlehem University. The project, called 'Wall Studies' was aimed at examining issues related to the occupation of land and territory.

To continue the work of the 'Wall Studies' project, an NGO/research centre was established in June 2013, the CERAR (Centre for Studies and Action Research on Resilience), CERAR's aim is to research and provide information and training on issues related to resilience in situations of extreme vulnerability and to set up projects that build capacity and resilience for populations in extreme vulnerability. The project is run jointly by Oxford Brookes University and CERAR in partnership with the Hebron International Resources Centre (HIRN), an important local actor in the South Hebron Hills. BSP is a multi-disciplinary project based around a



BUILDING SUMUD PROJECT

strong participatory ethos. It has a specific emphasis on the social and spatial consequences of violent environments. The project's aims consist of three main strands. The first is to contribute to a greater understanding of home and place attachment; the hardship and symbolic violence undergone by the residents and the coping strategies and adaptabilities they adapt. Secondly, by monitoring the interaction between social and environmental impacts of occupation the project highlights the potential for architectural and social interactions to facilitate conflict transformation. Finally, BSP attempts to propose a practical conceptualization to better translate research into empowering strategies as well as a creative conceptualization that links research and design projects with artistic initiatives.

BSP's approach is based on the Palestinian concept of sumud, a non-violent ethos of "steadfastness" which implies a form of patient strength and an active commitment to righteousness. Palestinians practice two main forms of sumud. The first of these, 'reactive sumud', sometimes known as passive sumud, aims to maintain a presence on the

land at all costs. The second, 'sumud of resistance' is a dynamic strategy that aims to seek ways of building alternatives to resist, challenge and adapt to the occupation. In their daily lives, Hebronites from the Old City face systematic direct and indirect forms of hardship; for most of them, the mere fact to continue to living in their homes is a highly demanding form of sumud. BSP has reached the conclusion that in order to strengthen these 'embers of resilience' and cope with the situation, two main strategies should be adopted. The first is to create an environment of emotional and social stability, oriented towards security and protection. The second is to encourage the local development processes and to stimulate individuals' capacity for innovation

This current study has focused on investigating if the lessons learned in the Old City of Hebron can be applied to the situation in the South Hebron Hills.

2. Defining resilience



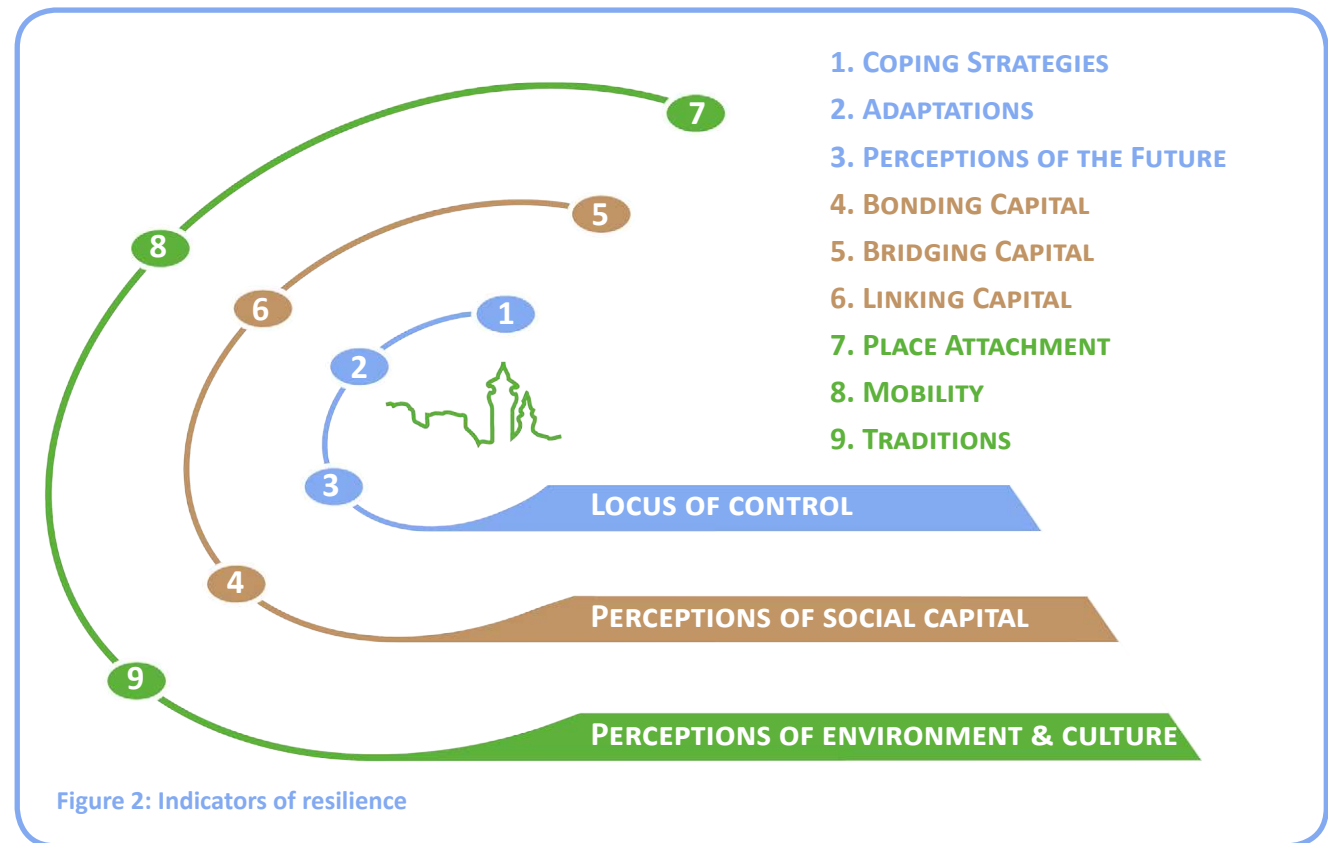
Resilience is ‘the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards’, in this case, the occupation, ‘to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions’². This ‘ability’, especially in the case of the occupation of Palestine, extends far beyond simple economic considerations. Some authors argue that on its own, applying the concept of resilience in social and political matters will, as a matter of course run into difficulty³.

Taking this into account, the team has strived to pay special attention to the social and cultural dimensions of resilience as they pertain to the plight of Palestinians living under occupation. In an effort to understand more fully the capabilities of the locals to adapt to the impacts of occupation, the team identified three key indicators.

These indicators are the locus of control, perceptions of social capital, and perceptions of environment and culture. **FIGURE 2** gives an overview of the three indicators, and the sub-indicators they are composed of.

2.1 Locus of control

Originally developed in the 1950s, by Julian B.



Rotter⁴, the concept of ‘locus of control’ is derived from the field of personality psychology. Rotter proposed the idea of locus of control to explain the degree to which individuals believe they are in control of certain aspects of their own lives. A

person with a strong belief that they are in full control of nearly every aspect of their lives is said to have an internal locus of control; meaning that the control of their life lies within themselves. On the other hand, someone who believes that their

[2] UNISDR, 2009. UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction. [pdf] Available at: http://www.unisdr.org/files/7817_UNISDRTerminologyEnglish.pdf [Accessed 21st March 2014].

[3] Béné, C., Wood, R.G., Newsham, A. and Davies, M., 2012. Resilience: New Utopia or New Tyranny? Reflection about the Potentials and Limits of the Concept of Resilience in Relation to Vulnerability Reduction Programmes. [pdf] London: Institute of Development Studies. Available at: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp405.pdf> [Accessed 21 March 2014].

[4] Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement: Psychological Monographs: General & Applied 80(1) 1966, 1-28.

lives are simply products of fate or coincidence, controlled by external factors completely outside of their control is said to exhibit an external locus of control. In the context of occupation and the control exercised by external factors individually and collectively on Palestinian lives, this was identified as a key indicator of the resilience of communities. To further elaborate this concept, a number of contributing factors were identified.

Positive and negative coping strategies

Positive and negative coping strategies are the strategies that are adopted in the attempt to cope with the threats of, and stresses due to, the occupation and indicate a belief by the people that at least some aspects of their lives are in their control. The team's investigation distinguished between positive coping strategies, which had beneficial long-term consequences and negative coping strategies, which had detrimental long-term consequences.

Adaptations

Adaptations were studied in order to understand how the society and culture has altered in the past, how it is currently changing both voluntarily and involuntarily, and what adaptations are anticipated to be necessary in the future. This desire or ability

to adapt indicates a belief on the part of the locals that at least some aspects of their lives are within their control.

Perceptions of the future

A person's perceptions of the future are an indicator of where her locus of control may lie. Someone who conceptualizes the future in terms of short time horizons (days, weeks, or even months) may do so out of a belief that life is dictated by external factors that are unpredictable and out of control. However, someone who regularly anticipates and plans for the longer term, exhibits aspirations, hopes, dreams and goals, and exhibits the initiative and capacity to pro-actively plan and anticipate is likely to hold a much more internal locus of control.

2.2 Perceptions of social capital

Folke argues that communities must rely on 'social sources of resilience such as social capital (including trust and social networks) and social memory (including experience for dealing with change)' to effectively cope and adapt⁵. Exploring this concept further, Woolcock distinguishes three types of social capital; bonding, bridging, and linking capital⁶. The team identified these forms of social capital as key indicators of the resilience of Palestinians to Israeli occupation.

Bonding capital

Bonding capital is the ability of individuals within a group with shared experiences to 'bond' and form social ties, which can be called upon to assist in coping with stresses. Forms of bonding capital investigated by the team in Palestine include solidarity, reliability, and economic, physical and emotional support within the community.

Bridging capital

Bridging capital refers to the ability of separate communities to coalesce, work together, call upon one another, and provide assistance to one another in times of need. The key indicators for bridging capital include participation in activism, information sharing, dialogue and consultation between communities.

Linking capital

Linking capital are the connections that a community has to the outside world; often referred to as 'vertical' linkages. The team sought to understand how these connections were made and maintained, who maintained them, with whom were they maintained, what value such connections have to the community and why.

[5] Folke, C., 2006. Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social-ecological systems analyses. *Global Environmental Change*, [pdf] Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378006000379> [Accessed on 24 March 2014].

[6] Woolcock, M., 2001. 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *Isuma: Canadian Journal of Policy Research* 2:1, pp 1-17



2.3 Perceptions of environment and culture

Occupation can drastically change the environment in which one lives and how they interact with it. As such, the team investigated the importance of cultural, religious, and social traditions to the local communities and the existing mechanisms for supporting and maintaining these important traditions.

To understand how the environment has changed, the team investigated the experiences of different generations of occupation and in the absence of occupation. Often, environmental changes include the cutting off of transportation or routes affecting the mobility of occupied people. Finally, a people's attachment to a specific place will often indicate a strong resilience and willingness to withstand and persevere extreme hardship.

The team investigated home and place attachment by seeking to understand attachment by examining who felt the attachment, taking into account age and gender), why the attachment was felt, and what, if any, were the limits to the attachment felt. The specific issue of symbolic violence and its impacts on culture and environment was also investigated.

The Deputy Head-Master at the secondary school situated in At-Tuwani sat at his desk, the brown patterned curtains behind him closed, to keep out the strong morning sun.

"I am a father and a friend to the children as well as their teacher".

It was clear that he considers their emotional well-being as being vital for the pupils to be able to concentrate and gain from the education provided. In measured tones, he explained that the school is very much a safe haven for the children, where the children are treated respectfully by teachers who have a deep understanding of the situation.

We asked a class of twelve children what the most important place for them in At-Tuwani was. Half of them explained that school is the most important place. When asked why school was the most important place, one child replied,

'Because I feel secure'.



127 Palestinian children aged between six and seventeen years old attend the school in At-Tuwani, some of whom walk as much as seven kilometres from other nearby villages. The teachers who work at the school are aware that the children are constantly influenced by the occupation and try to modify the learning environment to take this into account. The teachers try to ensure that the children are able to experience 'moments of exception' through sports and extracurricular activities, allowing them to briefly escape the pressures of the occupation. As part of the school curriculum, the teachers use role-play scenarios to help the children act out their fears and experiences of conflict to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the situation and find positive ways to adapt. The constant refrain to the students emphasises this:

'Try to always keep calm'.

The day after our meeting with the Deputy Headmaster, we returned to the village to learn that two girls had been injured by rocks thrown at them by settlers on their way to school from the nearby village of Tuba. We were told that sufficient distance had grown between the cohort of pupils and their IDF escort that had emboldened settlers to attack them. This escort is the only known incident



where the Israeli army escorts Palestinian children to school. In collaboration with MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), the school has a dedicated psychosocial unit with a qualified counsellor, to care for those who require on-going emotional support and the two girls were able to receive immediate support. We spoke to some of the children, who had been in the group that had been attacked and they said that they were undeterred and said that they would continue to walk on that same road to school.

Education is treated as the key to resistance: creating both a refuge and an opportunity to better equip younger generations for a life beyond the daily struggles of occupation. The views of a local kindergarten teacher, best summed up this belief.

'Education will make them stronger – education is the future'.



3. Overview of research trip

The research conducted focused on two villages in South Hebron Hills; At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir. While the two villages had much in common, there were also some important differences between them. Both villages faced the shared struggle of living under Israeli occupation with a constant threat of incursion by the Israeli authorities, as well as constant harassment from Israeli settlers who live nearby.

The team visited both villages on several occasions, meeting with different sectors of the population to try and get a balanced view of the community. The aim of our research was to ascertain what strategies each village had adopted, both individually and collectively, that helped strengthen their resilience, allowing them to continue to live occupation. The team then fed back the findings of the research to both villages to allow it to be used as a resource to draw on for other villages and organisations working in the region in the longer term. In addition to traditional research methods such as interviews or formal group discussions, the team employed participatory data collection methods such as informally accompanying shepherds, sitting with groups of women drinking tea, observing classrooms and having children share their life experiences through pictures.

At-Tuwani

At-Tuwani is along established community with a strong social structure, with an organised council and has largely succeeded in agreeing a master plan for development with the local Israeli authorities. Without an agreed master plan, the village would be unable to construct new houses or to expand existing dwellings. While other communities were not happy that At-Tuwani was, in effect working with the system, the local inhabitants justified this as being the only way in which they could continue to live in the local area. At the same time, the residents of At-Tuwani refuse to be confined by the master plan, constantly pushing against the borders it enforces, the team was informed that a few weeks before our visit the Israeli army had demolished three huts that the villagers had built. There were also a strong sense of community participation in this resistance, as evidenced by the efforts the community had made to stop the demolition of the kindergarten.

There is a large Israeli settlement, Ma'on, built very close to the village and it is attempting to encroach on the village's land. The main section of the settlement has been granted official status, but the settlement is attempting to expand to a nearby

hillside, which is one of the sources of tension over the road the children from Tuba use to come to school. This road, which runs between Ma'on and the intended settlement expansion, has been closed for all uses other than allowing the children to walk to school.

Additionally, the village felt a responsibility to other villages in the greater area and had organised funding to, and built pylons to extend their mains connected electricity (a rarity for Palestinians in Area C) to another village, Al-Foaqa, which lies inside the firing zone. The Israeli army promptly destroyed this extension; the wreckage of the pylons could be seen stretching along the hillside towards the firing zone.

Another impressive accomplishment of the community in At-Tuwani was the construction of a secondary school. While it is within the area now covered by the master plan, when it was started, there was no master plan and like every other building in the village was, at the time, liable to be demolished. As such, the locals expanded the building room by room. The village had been offered funding for the construction of the entire school, but had declined it, not wishing to risk the wrath of the Israeli authorities. This strategy of pushing the boundaries slowly has been highly

successful for the residents of At-Tuwani.

Additionally, there is a strong tradition of non-violent resistance and of involving the women in the village. In the eyes of local leaders, one of the most important developments in recent years has been the increased involvement of women in decision making.

Um al Kheir

Um al Kheir is a much more recent community, local residents informed the team that they had, before the Nakba (the Palestinian term for the 1948 war with Israel, meaning the catastrophe) they had lived a traditional Bedouin life in what is now Israel, moving to their current location after the war. They had purchased the land they now own in the early 1960's from residents of a nearby town, Yatta, and have become more settled over time. The social hierarchy in Um al Kheir is much more fractured than that in At-Tuwani, with an apparent division between two parts of the village. One half of the village is very open to the involvement of outsiders, engaging with the education system and trying to improve their opportunities, whereas the other half is much more committed to continuing to live as they always have. In addition to the issues that all Palestinians face living in the occupied territories, the residents of Um al Kheir appear

to face additional issues within the Palestinian community. It appears that they are in some ways ostracised by the rest of the community because of their Bedouin heritage.

Um al Kheir does not have a master plan and the difference in the approach taken to construction was stark; dwellings in Um al Kheir are much more temporary in appearance with only two permanent houses in the village. Additionally, the local children have to travel to another village to attend school and occasionally suffer harassment from the settlers on their way to and from school. The village shares the hilltop with a large Israeli settlement and the differences between the two communities are stark; Um al Kheir is rundown with sparse vegetation whereas the settlement features large modern houses and verdant crops.

Another stark difference between At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir is the access to services. While At-Tuwani has mains wired electricity and access to running water, the situation in Um al Kheir is much more difficult. Electricity in Um al Kheir is provided by an off grid setup installed by a local NGO, Komet-Me and relies on solar power that is stored in batteries. The team discussed the setup with the NGO and was informed that the Israeli authorities often issues demolition orders

against their equipment, making it exceedingly difficult for them to operate their service. Water in Um al Kheir is tapped from the main Israeli line, but the residents informed our team that during the summer supply is greatly curtailed, severely impacting the livelihoods of inhabitants in this harsh desert landscape.



Listening to people

Eid lives in the village of Um al Kheir. Over a cup of very sweet tea, a conversation about the occupation was taking place. No different to any of the numerous other stories shared during the course of this research. Not one smile was shared by Eid - suffering and struggles were the centre of his narrative. The house, with its clean white walls and stretched mattresses on the floor, illustrated effectively the tone of the conversation: simple, homely, temporary. From the front door of this small room with no windows, the clear view of the fence separating the village from the Jewish settlement was a constant reminder of the demolition order hanging over the building. Eid explained that the fence has a gate that is used by the settlers when incursions on the village take place.

'Sometimes I can hear the gate opening in the middle of the night, sometimes it's the settlers, other times soldiers. We fear...'

Silence. No question seemed appropriate to continue the conversation. Then, Eid continued:

'I am an artist; would you like to see my work?'

At the entrance Eid's wife smiled and started collecting the empty cups of tea, noticing the subtle shift in the conversation; she knew what was about to happen.



A steep walk guided the group to a house on the other side of the village, the path carefully marked with stones, a metaphor of the new picture about to be revealed. A carefully organized shelf by the door displayed a collection of model vehicles. *'This is what I make'* said Eid, not hiding his pride in his work. Eid described in detail a selection of the very precisely made vehicles, one by one. Model, maker, weight and use of the machines - all portrayed his pride in his models. It was hard not to find the whole experience surreal; difficult to believe it was happening in the same village in South Hebron, side by side with a Jewish settlement. The stories of violence and hardship seemed very distant at that moment.

Eid's wife, smiling, prepared coffee in the simple kitchen separated from the main room by a half wall. On top of this wall a replica of an Israeli assault helicopter rested casually.

The change was almost tangible. The children started to play; two girls, started drawing in our papers. A new born baby was held, oblivious of her surroundings. At that moment there was no occupation.

Eid's workbench, outside the house, faced down the hill. *'Here is where I work'*, Eid said, telling the team that on his days off he spends up to six hours a day working on his models. The biggest one, a bulldozer, took six months to finish, he explained.

'When I am working on my models, I am somewhere else'.

In his work, Eid displayed an attempt not to reconnect with the divine, but to temporarily disconnect himself from the reality around him. Like meditation, which can be used as a way to leave thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears behind, Eid found in his art a way to



disconnect from reality. The view from his workbench and the front door of his house shared the same characteristic; there was no sign of conflict or occupation visible in the horizon. With its careful positioning on the opposite side of the hill, the view was as clear of confrontation as if it was in a completely different reality.

'People ask me if I build these machines because of the occupation, I build them because I have always liked those machines'.

Dismissive of any connection between his work and the Israeli occupation, Eid explained his passion for the details. However, seconds later, when asked how he felt once the work was completed, he stated that it makes him feel empowered.

'I control it!'

The tools of destruction were subjugated by the model maker. No more fear. Eid's creative act brought into existence an inner peace which had not existed before. Working for Halo Trust, an NGO specialized in demining, Eid has constant contact with the Israeli army. "There are good people and bad ones in the army, just like anywhere." Eid's way of resistance is summarised by his attempts to live a normal life, despite the situation.

"If my house is demolished I will build it again, this is my resistance".

4. Key Observations



Figure 3: Key themes of resilience

In analysing what were the underlying issues essential for enabling the villages of Um al Kheir and At-Tuwani to strengthen their resilience, several key themes emerged. As shown in [FIGURE 3](#), nine themes; education, home attachment, activism, livelihoods, environment, community cohesion, connection, art and communication, and moments of exception - allow the villages to persevere in the face of adversity, living as they do under the constant spectre of occupation.

These themes reflect the adaptation of the preconceived thoughts that had arisen from research that was done before the trip to take into account the understanding that was gleaned from the team's interaction with the local people.

4.1 Education & Children

The level of engagement with the education system, and in particular childhood education, is significant within both of the two Palestinian communities visited. Education is treated as the key to resistance: creating both a refuge and an opportunity to better equip younger generations for a life beyond the daily struggles of occupation.

Schools are important places for youth interactions, and can be sites of peace building programs that actively counter cultures of violence. The school in At-Tuwani actively works to encourage the children to resist the persecution through non-violent means and celebrate solidarity and strength within the community.

Many of the young people we spoke to in Um al Kheir had attended vocational colleges and argued that only by acquiring such qualifications could they help their village adapt to the modern world.

4.2 Home and Place Attachment

Home and Place attachment exhibited in Um al Kheir and At-Tuwani stems from the everyday experiences of growing up and living in a small, closely knit community for generations. This deep affinity with the land, where the Palestinian people live out their lives, is embedded in their daily rituals and religious connections: becoming part of their collective and individual identity.

During periods of prolonged occupation, reconstruction efforts have portrayed a heightened sense of significance, as the opportunity to establish new or existing social, political and economic dynamics have arisen over the years. All associated activities, such as master planning and rebuilding, have therefore become sensitive issues, as their connection between urban development and social identity is attacked.

Place attachment is reflected in the community's fight for their right to remain and desperately precarious situation to survive.

4.3 Activism

Activism was a much clearer priority in At-Tuwani than in Um al Kheir, this may be because the day to day existence appeared to be more of a struggle in Um al Kheir

Villagers in At-Tuwani were heavily involved in the local non-violent resistance movement, something which they felt was important for bringing together the community as a whole. An important factor identified is the increasing role of women in local decision-making; this is credited as being one of the most important changes that had happened in recent years and is viewed as essential to the *sumud*.

Another key factor identified was the idea of resistance through existence, the idea that simply by continuing to live their lives in the face of occupation, the local villagers hope to prevail against the continuing encroachment of the Israeli settlements.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

رَأَى الذِّكْرُ النَّجْلَبَ
دَخَلَ الدَّيْلُ
اقْتَرَبَ النَّجْلَبُ، وَقَالَ:
فَأَنَا
صَدَّقَ الدَّيْلُ النَّجْلَبَ
لَقِجَمَ النَّجْلَبِ
لَا تَخَفْ يَا صَبْرِي
وَقَدْ جَمَعَ مِنَ الْخَمِ
عَجُوزٌ ضَعِيفٌ
خَلْفَ الشَّجَرَةِ
عَنِ الْخَمِ
وَأَمْسَكَ بِالذِّكْرِ



4.4 Livelihoods

Another key pillar of the resilience observed in Um al Khir and Al-Tuwani was the diversification from traditional livelihoods and continual striving towards self-sufficiency. In Um al Kheir, the men in the village were involved in a wide variety of livelihoods, both within the village and in the wider region. Traditional livelihoods such as sheep and goat herding were still prevalent among the settled Bedouin community, but it was clear that many of the younger generation were taking advantage of the education grants available. One of the men was using the skills he had learned as an agricultural engineer to start a nursery in the village (thyme ‘farm’ – hives project – and interestingly all the new projects are either collective or if employment occurs it will be for members of the community).

The diversification that the young people are pursuing goes hand-in-hand with the move to self-sufficiency, as employment outside of the community will bring much needed income, especially as there is encroachment on both villages land by settler communities

4.5 Environment

There is a strong sense of place attachment in both of the villages that were visited. From speaking to the people there was a sense that their connection to the land and surroundings were of great importance to the local people. In At- Tuwani, in particular, some families had been resident in the area for generations. The people of Um al Kheir, descended from Bedouins who were settled in the area in the early 1960s, felt that the land they had purchased was essential for their ability to continue living in the area. One of the young men we spoke to in At- Tuwani recorded a visit he had made with his grandmother to the village she came from before the Naqba (partition between Israel and the Palestinian Territories). He spoke passionately of the importance of the land that they had lost to them as a community, and the value that they placed on the land they had left, land that is under threat from settlement expansion. It was clear that exploiting the available resources in a sustainable way was important for them, especially given the harsh environment that they live in.

4.6 Community cohesion

In both villages, the local people stressed the importance of facing the threat from the settlers in a united way, grouping together for protection when the shepherds came under attack from the settlers.

While it was a very evident priority in At-Tuwani, community cohesion was not as evident in Um al Kheir. The apparent rift between the two sections of the community appears to be a large factor in this. Additionally, women in Um al Kheir are not as involved in the running of the village, remaining segregated from key events, something which may be a cultural difference. However the younger generation in Um al Kheir, the local villagers have organised events to attempt to bring together important community stakeholders in an informal setting, so it is hoped that the community cohesion will increase over time.



4.7 Regional interaction & outside connections

There has been a strong push for closer interaction between the different villages and groups of the region. Communication and participation between both At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir were reported. The residents of Um al Kheir reported visiting At-Tuwani in order to build relations between the two villages and to learn from some of the effective approaches being adopted there. These relationships are a strong force in building the resilience of both the individual villages and the wider regional and national community.

Many of the residents of Um al Kheir travel daily to surrounding villages and towns to work and to attend school or university thus building networks, which are essential for social and economic development.

A lack of transport greatly hinders the ability for the residents of both villages to physically connect with other villages in the region and limits their ability to work.

4.8 Art & Communication

Art and communication have become extremely useful and powerful ways of strengthening resilience and expressing feelings in both villages. The use of cameras to film events of violent abuse as a form of resistance is a clearly evident means of both documenting these events for international recognition and security and also as an internal means for the villagers to cope with the violence.

Many of the shepherds keep cameras with them while tending and grazing their sheep and record any instances of violence against them, which serves as an important record in cases against the settlers or military and has proved effective in reducing physical attacks.

Both villages have adopted the use of social media such as Facebook and Youtube in innovative ways of communicating their message and reaching the wider international community. This can also be seen as a means of resistance for the members of the villages.

4.9 Moments of exception

Moments of exception, or times in which they can forget about the ever-present occupation, were witnessed in both Um al Kheir and At-Tuwani. These moments are an important means of coping with the psychological pressures involved in living under occupation and can serve to also form stronger inter-community relationships.

The teachers who work at the school in At-Tuwani are all fully aware that the children are constantly influenced and affected by the occupation and make sure that the children are able to experience 'moments of exception' like taking part in fun student/staff volleyball matches.

Football games organised by the people of Um al Kheir between them and groups who have been working with the village are an important means of building relationships with other actors and are also an excellent way to overcome the pressure of living within close proximity to the settlement that forms such an oppressive part of their daily lives.

5. Implications of findings

As explained above in the section on Defining Resilience, when identifying the factors of resilience three broad themes emerged; locus of control, perceptions of social capital and perceptions of environment and culture. Our field observations led to the identification of nine themes that fall within these three categories. Within the factor of locus of control, education and moments of exception were identified in the sense that both involve projections of the future or the perception of alternatives to the current system.

The factor of perceptions of social capital encompasses activism and community cohesion, specifically in terms of bridging and the bonding capital but the presence of international organisations in both communities can also be perceived as evidence of strong linking capital. The factor of perceptions of environment and culture is considered to consist of home attachment, environment and art and communication.

The theme of livelihoods in some ways transcends the three factors proposed; while it can be linked to the locus of control in terms of capacities for adaptation and for coping, it can also be tied to culture when the willingness to maintain traditional livelihoods, such as the pastoral culture despite the occupation and associated restrictions on mobility

are considered.

Another aim of the research trip was also to compare the findings of previous research work undertaken in the old city of Hebron. One of the common themes that emerged in both places was the crucial importance of ‘space and place’, a concept that incorporates occupation, accessibility and heritage. This concept captures not just the importance of the physical organisation and make-up of public and private space but also the social meaning that these spaces hold for the communities.

Home and place attachment

In the old city of Hebron, though place and home attachment were significant, the attachment to home, or the family centre, appears to be felt in a stronger way than the attachment to the physical place or to the city. Building Sumud contends that this is due to the gradual expansion, often house by house, of the occupation of the city by Israeli forces and the obstructive difficulties the authorities have instituted in bringing construction materials to sites. These factors result in an immense difficulty in maintaining the home, in particular the heritage which comprises so much a part of the sense of identity and belonging to the ‘place’, not discounting the important work to mitigate this by

the done by Hebron Rehabilitation Committee.

In the South Hebron Hills, while in At-Tuwani, the master plan allows people to build and maintain their homes, in Um al Kheir, building permanent dwelling is forbidden. The residents of Um al Kheir thus continue their traditional nomadic custom of living in tents, reminiscent of their ancestral Bedouin culture though this seems to go against the express desires of the villagers to live in more modern conditions, showing a break with the nomadic culture. There appears, in this case, to be a stronger attachment to land and landscape than to home, in contrast to the Old City. Much of this may be impacted by the structures of the Israeli occupation, so much of which is centred on the control and use of land.

Symbolic violence

The importance of culture in both place traditions was clearly evident in the old city of Hebron, evident from the fact that Hebronites are forbidden from walking down Shuhada Street, even for traditional wedding ceremonies. This can be categorised as a form of symbolic violence. Likewise, in the South Hebron Hills, restrictions on grazing livestock and on the cultivation of olive orchards can be regarded as a form of symbolic violence.

Evidence of symbolic violence is present in both locations and is particularly emphasised by the symbols of the occupying communities, manifested as flags and barbed wire. In order to mitigate the effect of this phenomenon, the use of space has been adapted in the old city. Some of the ways in which the space has been adapted is by covering courtyards in the old city and using roofs to replace public spaces which the occupation has rendered inaccessible. In Um al Kheir, similar attempts to adapt the living space to be free of the occupation can be seen in the way that tents are organised to remove the occupation from view.

Social Capital

The fragmentation caused by the physical division of the old city of Hebron has resulted in a separation of neighbourhoods exacerbating the erosion of social capital. In contrast to this, in the South Hebron hills, traditional forms of activism such as linking with the wider world are more prevalent. There is however a major difference between At-Tuwani, where community cohesion is really strong and the participation of all community members is highly valued, and Um al Kheir where the community is divided, due to factors that may not be directly linked to the occupations, such as internal family conflict. As a result of this there is no common

agreement how to approach the adaptation needed and no common strategy on how to deal with advocacy and external organisations.

There is also a definite generation gap in the approaches taken to advocacy and activism. In both the old city of Hebron and the villages visited, the younger generation are much more willing to do use social media for advocacy, attempting to escape the physical isolation through new media, allowing their testimony to be heard. In the South Hebron Hills in particular, the need to have their testimonies heard is considered critical, especially given the paucity of options for linking to the outside world. Other than a small number of organisations who operate locally, Area C is largely isolated from the international community.

Outcomes

A positive outcome of the research trip was the presentation of the team's initial findings to the communities of At-Tuwani and Um al Kheir. This served to build local awareness of the power that their current coping strategies possess, increasing self-awareness and reflection, which provides a positive recognition of the work already done and an incentive to continue with a more focused and strategic approach to resistance. The prospects for future action-research are the need to strengthen

a systematic identification of forms of symbolic violence and the links between resilience and adaptation with a focus on the links to space, identity and culture. There is also a need to identify adaptation strategies and actions that can help in enhancing resilience mainly through moments of exception, art and communication but also through an adaptation of space formation.

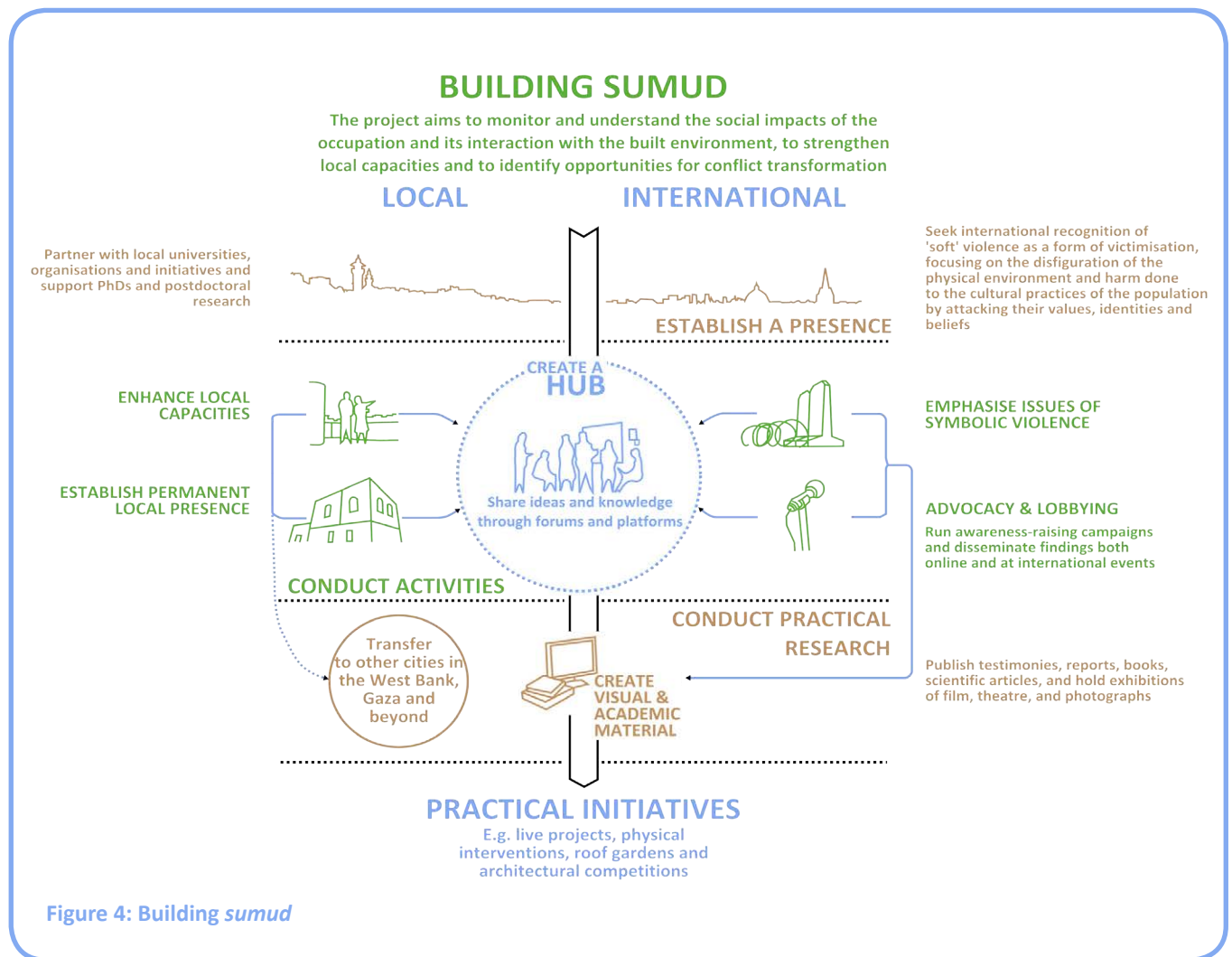
As part of the on-going work of the Building Sumud Project (BSP), this study trip is part of a longer-term initiative that aims to work toward a range of short- and long-term outcomes. An overview of the approach taken by the project can be seen in [FIGURE 4](#).

Creating a hub

This project is one of a number of initiatives that addresses key issues spatial occupation in the West bank, strategies for resilience and symbolic violence. Initially it is important to establish a hub within the project, in which organisations can develop contacts and can share information regarding their initiatives and findings.

Enhancing local capacities

Creating a local team of researchers and observers is an essential outcome for the long-term viability of this project. The aim is to develop an innovative multidisciplinary methodology based on methods drawn from social sciences, architecture, urban planning and law in order to monitor and to understand the interaction between the social and environmental impacts of the occupation, as well as to explore resilience and the effects of symbolic violence. The development of this methodology will be pursued in collaboration with local universities,



CBOs and NGOs. It is envisaged that the capacities developed can be transferred to other cities in the Palestinian Territories and abroad. The project also aims to support PhDs students as well as postdoctoral research.

Advocacy and lobbying

The expected outcomes of this project include the dissemination of information and findings, participation in awareness-raising campaigns, the collection of testimonies and written reports. These will be made public through various means, including the project website, social media and events held both in the Palestinian Territories and internationally.

Visual arts, such as films, photography exhibitions or theatre, will also be incorporated into the project as a tool for advocacy and for raising awareness. Academic studies and events will work to spread the project's findings about the situation in Hebron, the applied methodology, as well as any conceptual frameworks developed. Seminars, books or scientific articles will encourage reflection and the sharing of ideas between academics working in this and related fields.

The research will lead to recommendations for practical initiatives. The majority of this research

will be practice-led and it is a fundamental intention that any results must lead to practical action in the field.

Emphasising symbolic violence

This project aims to demonstrate the importance of recognising symbolic violence as a form of victimisation. Symbolic aggression can be found throughout the Occupied Territories in the system of settlements, roadblocks and checkpoints, which leads to the restriction of movement of Palestinians.

The destruction of the built environment and the creation of hostile environments are other ways the occupation harms the values, identities and beliefs of the Palestinian people.

The use of 'soft' violence is often underestimated, despite the negative physical and psychological impacts it has on communities. It is hoped that the project will lead to a better understanding and recognition of symbolic violence among practitioners and within the wider international community.

This report was produced by a research team from Oxford Brookes University in collaboration with the Centre for Study and Action Research on Resilience (CERAR) with the assistance of the Hebron International Resource Network (HIRN) who visited Palestine in April 2014.





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