Graffiti, walls, and the creation of a Palestinian transnational public

By: Ashley Toenjes

Abstract: If publics exist to facilitate will-formation, then deliberation is the vehicle which moves will-formation. Through what media does public discourse happen and circulate, and who has access to the production and consumption of those discourses? By working through the various theoretical approaches to publics, including Habermas, Fraser, Wedeen, Warner, and Gilroy, I consider the ways in which object-based and place-based publics create will-formation. These tools will be useful in considering how a particular transnational public sphere is being shaped around the Apartheid wall and its graffiti in Palestine. I argue that through Palestinian use of the Apartheid wall, it becomes the locus of a Palestinian transnational public through the use of English language and image-based graffiti to target transnational actors, and images of those graffiti are transnationalized through communications technologies, sometimes by Palestinians, but also by transnational actors who visit Palestine, often as occupation tourists.
Introduction
Public spheres perform many functions, including the facilitation of will-formation. This essay is an inquiry into a particular transnational public sphere— one which is formed around the so-called Apartheid wall in Palestine. Israel began construction on the wall around and within the West Bank of Palestine in 2002, and shortly thereafter Palestinians met the wall with graffiti, and this essay argues, in doing so have tried to create a transnational public will. Broadly, will-formation considers the ways in which the opinions and perspectives of the individuals in a public are collected, considered, and acted upon. Voting in a democracy is one example of will-formation. However, as this essay shows, will-formation can occur in many contexts, through various mediums, and can be the product of publics beyond democratic nation-states.

The Apartheid wall in Palestine, and in particular, the graffiti on it, gives us an interesting case to consider in the development of and access to transnational publicity. The Apartheid wall is known by many names, including separation wall, separation barrier, security fence and security barrier. How one refers to the wall often reflects her or his orientation toward the Israeli occupation of Palestine more generally, with those highlighting the security aspects of the wall being more sympathetic to the Israeli narrative of Israeli national security through separation from Palestinians, and those emphasizing the wall's role in separating Palestinians from one another and their lands choosing the language of separation. However, in his critique of the wall as a “security” barrier, Samer Alatout shows us some of the ways in which this narrative is not plausible. Alatout cites one example of a Palestinian woman who went to the Israeli courts to prevent the wall from blocking her route to work. In its stead, a gate was built and the woman was given a key to let herself “into” the Israeli side of the wall each day (2009, 964). Alatout rightly dismisses the language of “security” and “fence” when referring to the wall, citing them as “depoliticizing” and “too innocent”. Alatout is also critical of the name “Apartheid wall”, stating that there needs to be a better account of the two cases, South Africa and Israel, before we can adopt that language in describing Palestine (2009, 967). Alatout is right to raise this critique, however, there are some aspects of the Palestine and South Africa linkage that I find especially meaningful in formulating the parameters of a transnational public in Palestine, and it is for those reasons that this essay continues, if cautiously, using the term, “Apartheid wall”. By linking the construction of this wall to the creation of bantustans in South Africa, activists build a transnational link which transnational actors can easily identify with, even if they are not well informed about the Palestinian case. It is at once a tool to create recognition about the ways in which the wall acts, and to link the suffering of Palestinians and brutality of Israel to other colonial and occupational relationships. This is significant not only for activists in producing and maintaining solidarity efforts with Palestinians, but it locates Israel among other colonial regimes with little regard for the indigenous population on whose land it governs, and thus also serves an attempt to displace Israel's nationalist-exceptionalist security narrative that it often gives as justification for the wall.

In the following section I consider various works on the public sphere to highlight ways in which will-formation occurs, in order to identify new ways in which a transnational public is being formed in Palestine. To do this, I look at how issues of access to democratic will-formation in modern nation-states are problematized first by Jürgen Habermas (1999 [1962]), and later by Nancy Fraser (1992) and Mary Ryan (1992). Thematically, I am interested in what legitimizes an individual's participation in a given public, as well as how marginalized groups grapple with different obstacles to inclusion in hegemonic publics, including the ways in which they create new publics out of ambivalence or reaction to hegemonic publics. Understanding the way these themes have been theorized will aid in understanding one way in which Palestinians respond to the both the lack of an autonomous national government, as well as their exclusion from a global world order that currently privileges the nation-state as legitimate participant (although ways in which this global order are being
challenged are considered below). The discussion below also reveals the different ways in which publics are organized. Habermas argued that publics and will-formation were organized through institutions, but publics are also organized around objects and space. In Lisa Wedeen's qat-chewing publics in Yemen, men deliberate for hours, often in the presence of politicians, on matters such as electoral politics, creating a public that is organized around the use of qat (2008). Paul Gilroy's discussion of the formation of a Black public in North America gives us another example of an object-based public, in this case one that is organized around consumer goods (2010). Mary Ryan (1992) and Michael Warner (2002) provide us with examples of publics that are organized, in part, around particular uses of space. Ryan shows how street-based protests are part of public will-formation and Warner indicates the importance of place in the creation of a queer counterpublic in New York City.

Another way of thinking about will-formation is through the role of deliberation in a public. If publics exist to facilitate will-formation, then deliberation is the vehicle which moves will-formation. Through what media does public discourse happen and circulate, and who has access to the production and consumption of those discourses? By working through the various approaches to publics indicated above, I consider the ways in which object-based and place-based publics create will-formation. These tools will be useful in considering a new perspective on transnational publics that will clarify how a particular transnational public sphere is being shaped around the Apartheid wall and its graffiti in Palestine. I argue that through Palestinian use of the Apartheid wall, the wall becomes the locus of a Palestinian transnational public through the use of English language and image-based graffiti to target transnational actors, and images of those graffiti are transnationalized through communications technologies, sometimes by Palestinians, but also by transnational actors who visit Palestine, often as occupation tourists.

Public will-formation
Many publics and counterpublics are centered on the concept of will-formation. Understanding questions of access to a public, such as who gets to participate, or what happens when groups of people are marginalized, will aid us in considering how publics are shaped and public wills are formed, and, of particular interest to this essay, how people seek access to publics. To address these questions, I draw on the work of several public sphere thinkers, beginning with Habermas' conceptualizations of the bourgeois public, and then I consider the limits which others have found in Habermas' work.

In his seminal work on the public sphere, Habermas describes how, for a fleeting moment in history, an ideal public sphere existed, where some people engaged in rational-critical debates through the use of print media. Habermas' bourgeois public was founded and expanded upon on the notion of deliberation through open, rational critical debate of the public authorities (1999 [1962], 88). Over time, this uncensored debate evolved into the institutionalization of political parties and laws which upheld and protected bourgeois values and bourgeois dominance in the public sphere. Habermas argues that the critically-debating public and its interplay with the British parliament resulted in the late 18th or early 19th century in political parties which could articulate platforms and influence public opinion in elections. Bourgeois public values were also institutionalized through law. The process of debating the parameters of private law informed the government of what public opinion is, and the government was expected to make policy based on the outcomes of public debate. These examples show how Habermas situates the role of deliberation and will-formation in institutions such political parties and law, but Habermas leaves us wondering what happens when groups do not have access to the institutions which protect and facilitate rational-critical debate. In the American context, women and Black Americans are two examples of these groups. From an international relations perspective, we also need to ask Habermas how publics deliberate in weak states, with their lack of national institutions to facilitate will-formation. Before addressing these critiques in detail, I draw on Fraser to elaborate on
the ways in which rational-critical debate limits access to the public sphere.

Ironically, Habermas' public sphere began as a way of broadening accessibility to the public sphere, a point he articulates in narrating the rise of the middle-class in Europe and their challenge to the nobility for a space to debate issues of public interest. One weakness of Habermas' conceptualization of access to a public sphere is that despite its language of universal access, access is only granted to those who have the proper credentials to participate in rational-critical debate. One theme among Habermas' critics has been to highlight the different lines of class, educational, and gender privilege that are implied in rational-critical debate as the point of entry into a public.

One way in which Fraser rightly calls into question Habermas' assumptions of "full accessibility" to the public sphere is by applying feminist, structural criticisms to Habermas' liberal, bourgeois public. Even if the formal race, gender, and class restrictions of Habermas' public did not apply, we would still need to consider the implications of structural inequalities with regards to access to the deliberative public. The liberal-bourgeois public relies on a concept which Fraser calls "Bracketing"—the idea that difference is put to the side when people participate in public deliberation. Drawing on the work of Jane Mansbridge, Fraser argues that bracketing often works to reinforce inequalities because it often results in deliberation which is built on the discursive forms and vocabulary of the dominant groups (Fraser 1990, 64). In the case of gender, the development of the bourgeois public sphere was imbued with gender constructs that painted the rational character of public speech as masculine, and was predicated on a masculine, public, bourgeois man whose class was complimented by his feminine, domestic counterpart (Fraser 1990, 59-60).

Fraser draws attention to feminist research which has uncovered gendered differences in the ways in which men and women communicate in meetings—where men speak for longer periods and interrupt women more frequently than women interrupt men—to give at least one idea of the ways in which structural inequalities may challenge actual claims to (nearly) universal access to a liberal-bourgeois public sphere. According to Fraser, we need to challenge the idea that it is possible for people to deliberate as if they are equal, "in a larger societal context that is pervaded by structural relations of dominance and subordination," (1990, 65). Ryan echoes Fraser's call in her work which argues that the "structural transformation" which gave us the public sphere is the same transformation through which the private and social converged into a place which "designated women a second species of citizens," (1990, 267). But as Fraser and Ryan each indicate, different formal and informal restrictions on access to publics of will formation has not meant that marginalized groups, such as women, have been absent from publics and public deliberations.

In her account of Ryan, Fraser indicates how Ryan's revisionist history of nineteenth century North American women shows how women across class and ethnic lines sought public access. Elite women used voluntary societies, and often publicized issues of domesticity for access to the public sphere. Women with less class privileges participated in working-class men's public protests. Still other women challenged women's formal exclusion from politics through the first wave feminism (Fraser 1990, 61).

Ryan situates her own feminist reading of the public sphere in the same structural context as Fraser and Mansbridge, writing that when North American women finally won the franchise, and thus, formal access to the public, it was "a hollow fortress," (Ryan 1990, 263). There remained, and continue to remain, too many barriers to women's equal access to public space. But long before the franchise was extended to American women, they creatively maneuvered to find a public voice, participating in "publicness in an active, raucous, contentious, and unbounded style of debate,” which included first-
wave feminists who were otherwise excluded from the institutions which comprised American publics and informed political decision making (1990, 264).

**Object-based publics**

The debates on will-formation outlined above indicate the limits of Habermas' institutionally organized public, and this section will focus, in part, on Gilroy's case of a Black public in the United States that formed based on its formal, and later informal, exclusions from the institutions of public will-formation in the United States. This line of critique is less meaningful in instances of weak states, such as Palestine, where formal institutions of public will-formation do not exist. In those cases, publics find other ways of forming, as Wedeen shows us in the case of a different weak state, Yemen. Both Gilroy and Wedeen show us how publics can form around objects, in spite of or in the absence of institutions of will-formation.

Gilroy is concerned with how a Black public identity has formed around material culture in the US. Gilroy points to the origins of the automobile in the US as a distinctively “white” story. Not only were automobiles marketed specifically to white consumers, but some companies also expressly forbade the sale of their vehicles to Black buyers. For Black consumers car ownership became not just a status marker, but also a mark of citizenship in a time when formal politics did not allow Black Americans to “belong” (2010, 34). For Black Americans in Jim Crow America, when political rights such as the franchise were still not a reality for most, it was through consumerism that Black Americans were able to display their political agency. As a result, Gilroy argues, Black American's “civic recognition involved the retreat of publicity and the privatisation of their culture,” (2010, 12). This meant while white Americans were able to exercise their civic belonging through formal institutions such as voting, Black Americans were limited to showing their belonging through private purchase.

While Gilroy is focused on understanding how Black Americans navigated their formal and informal exclusions from the white hegemonic public, Wedeen suggests that democratic theorists “deromanticize the ballot box” and consider other ways in which democratic practice happens (2008, 112). Looking at Yemen, Wedeen indicates ways in which a public forms around the use of qat, a plant that is chewed for a stimulant effect. Wedeen argues that qat-chewing sessions are political because national level policy decisions are made in them, information about political events gets shared in them, and elites and their constituents negotiate power relations (114). Qat-chews happen frequently, are unstructured and spontaneous, but revolve around the use of qat and its stimulant effects to create the atmosphere of deliberation that happens. In addition to being political, Wedeen also asserts that qat chews are an important part of democratic will-formation in Yemen because they facilitate political participation. These examples show us ways in which we can consider publics of will-formation without the strictures of Habermas' institutionally-focused publics.

Black automobile culture has become a counterpublic in the American collection of publics, because, as Gilroy argues, Black American culture was “fed by a harsh social system that prohibited displays of wealthy and property by the minority of blacks,” who could afford to (2010, 49). In other words, Black Americans sought access, or to belong, to the hegemonic public. The consumerism of Black Americans in Jim Crow America began not as a way to create identifiably “Black” objects, but rather as a way for Black Americans to publicly show that they had made it, and could be part of the market and society that had previously been violently reserved for whites. Black Americans could show, through using the right objects in the right ways, that they belonged, regardless of the formal institutions and racism and bigotry which actively tried to show Black Americans that they did not belong. Likewise, Wedeen's location of a public formed around using qat indicates ways in which the
use of an object can activate a public. One key point of departure between Gilroy and Wedeen's object-oriented publics is the role of deliberation in the orientation of the publics they describe. For Gilroy, there is no need for deliberation, but for Wedeen, like Habermas, Fraser, and others, deliberation is a key feature of the public she articulates, and like Habermas and Fraser, deliberation happens through talk.

So far, I have addressed the limits of Habermas' rational-critical public, by showing that rational-critical debate is not always the vehicle through which deliberation happens. Ryan shows us that deliberation can happen in punctuated, uni-directional street protests. Wedeen and Gilroy provide us with ways in which we can consider publics that form around objects.

Place-based publics
In his work on queer publics, Warner discusses key elements in the formation of a queer counter-public in New York City. The marginalization of queerness in a heteronormative culture that results in somatic and structural violence against queer-identified people provides at least one compelling explanation for why queer-identified people have worked so hard to create a vibrant and distinct counter-public in which they can belong.

The political right's “sexual purification” of the hegemonic hetero-national public through the privatization of depictions of sexual acts works to normalize heterosexual privacy. Warner argues that this is linked to economic privilege and social reproduction which work together to “demonize” representations of sex (2002, 190), and results in structural violence against queer-identified people, such as the impediment of queer access to important mechanisms which inform and create legal the bases of the hetero-national public, such as legal marriage (until very recently in some US states). In considering the Christopher Street example, Warner also identifies concerns about bodily violence as part of what necessitates a safe space for queer-identified people away from the homophobic, heteronormative, hegemonic public (2002, 191).

Christopher Street was a strip in New York City that became a gay public space because of its concentration of gay bars, porn shops, and queer-identity items such as freedom rings. Queer-identified “pilgrims” came to this street each day, and over time the space became queer and developed, “a dense, publicly accessible sexual culture,” (Warner 2002, 204). The transformation of this space had important repercussions, including the opening of the country's first gay and lesbian bookstore, and it also created a space for gay will formation (204). In this space, queer-identified people could belong. When Mayor Giuliani passed zoning laws that would force most of these businesses to close, and others, such as the porn stores, to relocate in the same space at hetero porn stores, Warner argues that not only will the place-based aspect of this public be reduced beyond recognition, but it is in this instance that he writes about his concern for the physical safety of queer-identified people referenced above.

The significant point I want to draw out from Warner's work on Christopher Street, is that queer-identified people created the space in opposition to the homophobic and heterosexual norms of the hegemonic culture in which they were a part of. The opening and patronage of explicitly gay businesses suggests a development of a counter-market which exists separate from things that are commonly bought in sold in mainstream shops and the “pilgrimage” of queer-identified people to Christopher Street indicates a leaving of a certain place or space (the hetero-normative nation-state) and entering into some other place (a queer counter-public). These actions indicate some of the ways in which queer culture in New York City sought to establish itself apart from the hetero-normative, hegemonic national space.
Publics can be organized in many ways. We have seen how institutions, objects, and places have all formed the basis around which publics are organized. These points will be elaborated upon and become more significant when we consider how the Apartheid wall is both an object-based and place-based public below.

**Transnationalization**

Although Habermas does not explicitly indicate that the nation-state (as opposed to some other governing apparatus) is the recipient of the public sphere's ration-critical debate, in one of her critiques of Habermas, Nancy Fraser highlights how the nation-state is implied through a number of assumptions Habermas makes (2009). Fraser argues that the function of the market economy in *The Structural Transformation* is that of a capitalist market economy regulated in the way a national economy is regulated. Fraser also argues that Habermas assumes no language barriers in the public debate, symptomatic of his assumption that debates are taking place in a national language (2009, 91). Through these, and four other points, Fraser indicates that the public sphere is often tacitly being theorized through this so-called Westphalian lens, although in reality publics operate in a post-Westphalian, or transnational, perspective.

There appears to be an agreement about the significance of virtual communications on the development and maintenance of transnational publics. For Fraser, the immediacy of communications in a technological age is the basis of the transnational public (2009). The role of international communications also undergirds Sassen's piece which argues that “global cities”, as the nodes which connect to form globalization, are necessarily connected through technological communications (2008).

**The wall**

Theories of transnational public spheres agree on the importance of communication technologies in uniting transnational publics (Fraser 2009, Sassen 2007). One question that is not being asked is how can communities with infrequent access to communication technologies participate in transnational publics? Are there other modes of connection between transnational publics? In considering the case of graffiti and murals on the Apartheid Wall in Palestine, this essay contributes to the understanding of communication technologies, by underscoring its importance in the development of one transnational public, and also by showing its limits. The importance of communication technologies is contingent in the case of the Apartheid Wall graffiti because, as I argue in this section, there is already a discourse happening on the wall through graffiti. This discourse is at least partially transnationalized by the movement of tourists in and out of Palestine, so it does not rely on communications technologies to create a transnational public in the sense that Habermas' public needed a national media to help bind the public. In this sense, I suggest that the importance of communication technologies are contingent on the discourse that is already taking shape through the graffiti of the wall.

Many of those messages are performed by local (Palestinian) actors who have limited access to communication technologies, but their message is amplified by those actors, including many occupation and religious tourists, who take pictures of the wall and disseminate them through communication technologies.

I have begun to indicate some of the ways in which we can conceive of the wall as transnational space, and here I want to explicate and expand on those and other ways. There is the inherent “transnationalness” of a wall which connects, through disconnection, two nations. This aspect of the wall has been conceptualized by others (Olberg 2011, Hanauer 2011, Hanauer 2004). Much of this other literature focuses on discursive analyses of graffiti between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian performed graffiti where the communities either respond to each other in polemical or peaceful
language, or in messages that reify each sides own political agendas and political space. The wall is also transnationalized discursively by activists who call it the “Apartheid” wall, as discussed in the introduction. Activists also transnationalize the wall by adding their own content to the graffiti, including internationally known street artists such as Banksy (Hanauer 2011). The wall is transnationalized not only through the participation of these graffiti-activists, but also through their sharing of these images and expressions through the internet and other communication technologies. What is largely missed in these literatures, however, is how graffiti performed and produced by Palestinians themselves also gets transnationalized.

This final mode of transnationalization relates most directly to the issues of contingency I discussed in the first paragraph of this section. There is a sharp divide in Palestinian society between those who have regular access to transnational communication technologies, and those who do not. When the Apartheid Wall is understood as transnational public space, however, potentially any Palestinian who can access paint, can take part in the transnational public discourse that has centered on the wall (literally). The presumed contingency of transnational publics on communications technology becomes complicated in this process. To be sure, as other literatures have indicated, there is an evident transnationalization of the wall which occurs with or without Palestinian performance, but Palestinians’ ability to participate in that transnational public is reliant at once on the localized position of the wall and on the movement of those images and messages to transnational public spaces by those with access to communications technology.

The transnationalization of Palestinian performed graffiti might be less significant if it happened incidentally, but a close analysis of graffiti in Palestine suggests that Palestinians are targeting transnational public space through graffiti on the wall, and indeed trying to engage in transnational public debates and effect government policies through their actions. A historical comparison of the use of graffiti during the first Palestinian Intifada (1986-1993) and the graffiti of the Apartheid wall contextualize the ways in which Palestinians use graffiti a tool of public discourse, and how language is manipulated based on its target audience. I briefly consider some of the literature on graffiti, and then discuss the graffiti of the first Intifada.

Studies on graffiti in different social and political contexts show that context matters in determining meanings of graffiti (Lombard 2013, Creasap 2012, Doering 2009), and more importantly, so does access to power (Waldner & Dobratz 2013, Doering 2009). Graffiti is often performed by marginalized groups who feel they have no other political recourse (Lombard 2013, Hanauer 2011, Peteet 1996, Oliver & Steinberg 1990). In the Palestinian context, graffiti containing explicitly political messages were part and parcel of the first Palestinian Intifada, and the extant analyses of the graffiti of this time period shows that the political messages of Intifada-era graffiti acted as a way to circumvent the brutal censorship that the Israeli government imposed on Palestinians until the post-Oslo era. Without access to a national media, political expressions, or other elements of self-determination, graffiti was a way for Palestinians to transgress the censors and to express political messages, sometimes encouraging the continuance of the Intifada and its tactics of civil disobedience, sometimes asserting Fatah or Hamas dominance in an area, and still other times expressing Palestinian national identity (Bishara 2010, Peteet 1996, Oliver & Steinberg 1990). What is interesting about this graffiti is that is was nearly always in Palestinian Arabic, and the slogans were references to localized (sometimes neighborhood specific) events. Peteet references the occasional use of English in the graffiti, but states that it was to target an international delegation that Palestinian actors knew would be coming through the area (1996, 145). Palestinians were able to evade the censors not just in the national arena, but also transnationally, a full decade before the Apartheid wall was even built.
As the Palestinian liberation movement grew from not one, but two, failed national uprisings, it too extended itself to transnational networks, such as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, to bring an end to occupation. Palestinian performed graffiti seems to parallel that trajectory. Where it was once the medium of national political will and public formation, it has adapted its same national political will to the formation of a transnational public in its efforts to bring an end to the occupation. Where Palestinian graffiti once worked to subvert the censors of Intifada-era occupation, it now works to subvert the limits of access to technology, a new-age censorship which is the product of strict import limits and Israeli-managed economy.

To consider the ways in which the graffiti on the Apartheid wall creates a transnational public, I want to recall the tools which emerged from our discussion of public sphere theorists. Most broadly, we learned that when a group of people are denied access to public space, they tend to push back until they are included, or have a public space of their own. That push-back includes forging new forms of public discourse, new places and ways of assembling, and can be motivated by objectives or desires of will formation or belonging. In considering the Palestinian transnational public, I argue that the new public discourse takes shape through the wall graffiti, that the wall provides the site for a place-based and object-based public, and that Palestinian actors are seeking to influence a transnational will. Transnational actors, usually in the form of tourists, expand this discourse not only by viewing the images and text (and sometimes adding to them), but also by taking pictures of the graffiti and circulating those images transnationally, especially through the internet. In the following section, I will expand on the ways in which these processes of publicness and publicity happen, using the language of public spheres to situate the Palestinian transnational public.

**Place-based and object-based publics**

Habermas locates “the” public sphere in institutions, tracing its split from the royal court to literary salons, and from literary salons into public coffee houses. Most of Habermas’ interlocutors considered in this essay have rejected the emphasis Habermas placed on institution-based publics, showing other ways in which publics are organized. Wedeen and Gilroy suggest publics are organized around object-use, using qat-chews and participation in a stylized consumerism as examples, respectively. Warner and Fraser suggest publics are organized around discourse, and my reading of Warner indicates that place can also be an important factor in organizing publics. The convergence of these two ways of thinking about publics provides a useful framework for thinking about publics organized around the Apartheid wall.

In the most usual sense of walls, walls are place-based objects. I suggested that publics can be organized around object-use, and in that collective use, objects become more than they are. Qat chews are more about what unfolds in the discussions than about the qat itself, and Black consumerism is having the right objects to show Black identification. In both of these cases, the use of the objects is imbued with certain meanings and functions which give the objects synergetic value, or define the objects as more than they are outside of a given discourse. But how does one use a wall, and more specifically, the Apartheid wall?

The Apartheid wall's most basic function is to act as a barrier, though what kind of a barrier it is remains contested. The Israeli government officially builds the wall in the name of security, and thus we might say that Israel uses the Apartheid wall for security. This ascribes certain meanings to the wall and it certainly makes the wall more than just a wall for Israelis who are supposedly protected by it, but it is hard to see any ways in which the wall organizes an Israeli public. Israelis protest for and against the wall, for and against the occupation, for and against militarized conflict, and though the wall can be a significant part of these debates, it does not function as the agent of discourse, but rather it is the
Can Palestinians “use” the wall? They are not the recipients of the security it is supposed to provide, so they cannot be said to use it in that way. To “use” an object indicates a certain kind of agency which Palestinians do not have over the wall as a security barrier. It seems difficult to suggest that Palestinians, as subjects of the wall and the upheaval it imposes, are capable of using the wall, unless they could find a way to give the wall a new meaning or function. By using the wall as a canvas and bulletin board, as well as a site of resistance, Palestinians have found ways in which to establish agency against the wall and to “use” it. Construction of the wall began in 2002, and by 2005 the world famous street artist, Banksy, had left his mark on the wall. It is unclear when the first Palestinian produced graffiti appeared on the wall, but we can see that at least since 2005 the wall has been the site of anti-wall and anti-occupation graffiti and art. Internet searches of images on the wall reveal stills of the same Banksy image with different auxiliary text and images adjacent to it. This reveals that others are painting and repainting the wall with some frequency, and Hanauer confirms that this is the case in the portion of the wall which he studied adjacent to Abu Dis (2011). The fact of the graffiti, as well as the content of the graffiti, sometimes expressing solidarity, sometimes linking the wall and the occupation to the US (a reference to the US’ abundant foreign aid to Israel) both indicate that the act of producing graffiti on the wall is an act which inscribes a new meaning into the wall. In some ways, the wall becomes more than a wall. It becomes both a thing and a place where people and ideas meet in opposition to the wall and to the occupation.

The Apartheid wall is also a place. Much like place-based aspects of Warner's counter-public, it is not the place alone that makes the Apartheid wall a public, but it is how the wall functions in that place. Warner argues that publics are organized through the circulation of media, and I argue that place is important so long as it facilitates that process. In Warner's example, place became salient in two ways. First, the rise of Christopher Street as a queer place led to the establishment of many queer shops that circulated materials of interest to the queer counter-public, including gay pornography. Second, after New York City passed zoning laws requiring the relocation of a gay pornography shop into an area where the heterosexual pornography shops were, Warner expresses concern for the safety of those who enter the gay pornography store (2002, 191). In so far as place facilitates the distribution of materials which bind a public, place becomes an important consideration in the development of counter-publics, who are not likely to have access to mainstream and hegemonic modes of distribution, and are not represented by materials which circulate publicly.

Palestinians have limited access to different kinds of media circulation. Satellite television is the most prevalent, which gives Palestinians access to hundreds of different Middle Eastern news and entertainment stations, including a few Palestinian produced channels (Bishara 2010). Even the Palestinian produced stations are compromised in their ability to produce and circulate meaningful programming due to their reliance on strings-attached aid from foreign donors which dictates perspectives news agencies are allowed to cover (Live: From Bethlehem, 2009). As indicated above, Palestinians have limited access to communications technologies such as the internet, and those who do have access are typically from a particular age and class range.

These obstacles to accessing a meaningful media circulation challenge Palestinian access to both national and transnational publics. A localized, place-based public space is one way in which Palestinians could attempt to create a public space. The Apartheid wall provides that place, and the graffiti on the wall contributes to national and international discourses on the meaning of the wall and the occupation. Palestinians using the wall as a site of resistance and discourse circulation demonstrate one way in which place-based and object-based publics converge. In this most recent discussion of
place-based publics, I have implied that the content of the graffiti is important to the construction of a public around the Apartheid wall. In the following section I indicate some of the ways in which that content becomes significant.

**Transnational will-formation**

In the Habermasian framework, the purpose of will-formation is for the people to determine what the collective political opinions of the people are, and to communicate those opinions to the ruling apparatus, or sovereign so they may legislate accordingly. Given this function of democratic will formation, it is typically theorized within the boundaries of the nation-state, where the ruling power has the legitimacy to act on behalf of the people it rules. In the absence a global sovereign, it might seem peculiar to suggest a process of transnational will formation, but I argue that based on the content of the graffiti, Palestinians seek to create a transnational will that opposes the wall (and the occupation) and targets the power structures and governments (in particular the American government) that Palestinians see as complicit in the wall and its effects on their lives.

Ryan and Fraser have indicated ways in which Habermas' requirement of rational-critical debate to determine public will is exclusionary. Fraser's discussion on the limits of bracketing are illuminating, but Ryan's location of public deliberation in street protests provide a stronger parallel for the Palestinian transnational public we are trying to outline. Ryan's study of classed and gendered exclusions from the national governing body demonstrates ways in which people demand a voice when they are denied access to modes of rational-critical debate. Palestinian graffiti on the Apartheid wall provides another example of ways in which exclusions to rational-critical debate are altered. One major difference between Ryan's case of 19th century America, and the contemporary case of Palestine is the target of the protests. In 19th century America, the protests fit Habermas' paradigm for will-formation in so far as the target of the protests were either local (Ryan 1990, 269) or national (Ibid. 282-83) forms of government. But who are Palestinians targeting with their graffiti?

In the discussion of graffiti in the first Intifada above, I noted that graffiti was often in Palestinian Arabic, and referred to local and national level events (Peteet 1996). The use of English was reserved for those moments when graffiti on city walls would be seen and read by outsiders of the occupation, people neither Israeli nor Palestinian. In the fifteen or so years since the beginning of the first Intifada to the construction of the wall, great changes happened in technology, included an increased global access to the internet. Faster, cheaper internet, and smaller, smarter computers (and now phones), have made the capturing and transnational sharing and receiving of images effortless for those who can afford the technologies. Whereas once Palestinians had to wait for transnational actors to come and physically see graffiti, it seems there is an understanding that today the wall is always visible to transnational actors, virtually or physically. As such, Palestinian produced graffiti, makes prevalent use of English or other internationally recognized symbols.

The use of English suggests that Palestinians are targeting a transnational audience, but that explanation alone does not help us understand the process of transnational will formation I suggest. To make this point I want to contextualize and discuss one image which appeared on the wall near Bethlehem sometime in 2010. USAID (US Agency for International Development) has been the subject of Palestinian critique since it began doing work in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1994 (see Jad 2009 and Roy 1999 for discussions on this). USAID is a source of confusion for Palestinians, who watch the US at once fund the Israeli occupation and are complicit with Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while also funding development projects which are often focused on alleviating pains caused by the occupation. As Roy indicates, development money spent on Palestinian development is not trusted because it comes from the same hand that funds Israeli arms acquisitions
and now funds and provides logistical support for the construction of the wall. In 2010, a large mural was painted on the wall featuring the USAID logo and the text “Brought to you by USAID”. This image appears against other images on the wall of US flags with stars of David or dollar signs in place of the fifty-stars as well frequent use of text such as “Paid for by US taxes”, or a weeping statue of liberty.¹

There are many ways Palestinians could frame their resistance to the wall, so the choice to name and shame US complicity in the wall and Israeli occupation is significant. One of the most striking things about this choice is the fact that it calls to question US actions rather than Israeli actions, and it is in this difference that I find a conscious attempt at creating a transnational public will. Rather than focusing on their own victimization from the occupation, or making appeals to their occupiers, Palestinians direct their graffiti toward a powerful country whose involvement and complicity in the occupation is evident from UN voting records to documentation of US foreign aid to Israel to the tear gas canisters Israeli soldiers use as live ammunition bearing “Made in USA” logos. Palestinian graffiti is not only connecting the ways in which the Israeli occupation is transnationalized, but by connecting it to US tax dollars, the graffiti also seems to be targeting the American people.

The locations of the America-critical graffiti add a final dimension that I think will amplify this case of English language graffiti. Of the few studies of graffiti on the Apartheid wall, the focus is on graffiti in either Bethlehem (Olberg 2011, Parry 2010, Rokem 2010) or Abu Dis, which is a neighborhood of Jerusalem (Hanauer 2011, 2004). The prevalence of English graffiti in these two areas, both of which are important tourist destinations, further suggests the tactical use of graffiti, targeting even locations of the wall that are most likely to be viewed and photographed by tourists.

Sassen shows us that in a global era, international connections do not need to follow a concentric model. Rather, through her concept of global cities we see that people of different countries connect to each other below the level of national governments. The transnational public I have outlined in this essay supports Sassen's argument, with some deviations. Palestinians are connected transnationally not through their own connections to communication technologies, but through their connection to the Apartheid wall. Their voice, through graffiti on the wall, gets connected to whoever can access their images and text on the wall.

Conclusion
Graffiti can serve many purposes. In the case of Palestine, we have seen how graffiti forms the discourse which connects a transnational public. Graffiti enables Palestinians to overcome the limits the occupation has put on their abilities to connect to a transnationalizing world and Palestinians carefully position their graffiti on the Apartheid wall to create a transnational deliberation and create a transnational will which joins them in condemning the wall and the occupation.

Tracing both the change over time in how Palestinians have used graffiti, as a local “news” source and neighborhood marker on city walls during the first Intifada, to English language slogans and America-oriented images in tourist dense areas on the construction of the wall, I have argued that Palestinians are actively reaching out to the transnational community to create this will.

Using the work of public sphere theorists such as Fraser, Ryan, Wedeen, and Gilroy, we have seen how publics form around objects and around place. Understanding how publics form in these ways contributed the conceptual tools necessary to delimit the ways in which the graffiti on the

¹ Most of these images can be found in an internet image search, but see Hanauer 2011 for similar images.
Apartheid wall functions as center of a transnational public.
References


