Marleena Huuhka

Performances in virtual borderlands

In this article, I examine material documenting the Gaza genocide, published across social and traditional media. Streams of videos and images form curated assemblages of performances that algorithms shape and direct towards viewers. These assemblages construct an experience of life in the midst of genocide while also revealing the potential of performance as a form of resistance. My article moves within and across the interstitial spaces and interfaces between war and peace, story and lived reality, and material and virtual performance. I ask what kinds of performances are formed in these spaces, and what potentials for resistance hybrid, boundary-crossing performance can bring forth.

Keywords:
intermedial performance, hybrid performance, social media performance, performance research, practices of resistance

Introduction

In October 2023, following Hamas's surprise attack on Israel on October 7th, Israel launched a full-scale offensive against Gaza. Due to the absence of international press, the war that followed was documented almost entirely by Palestinians – both civilians and journalists – in a conflict that has been the deadliest for journalists in modern history.[1] With the help of electronic SIM cards, both Palestinian journalists and civilians shared material on social media. The immediacy and unfiltered nature of the footage have sparked global solidarity movements in favour of the Palestinians, as awareness of Palestine's status as an occupied and colonised land has grown more widespread.[2] The war was fought on Palestinian soil, but another battle – that of information and propaganda – was also waged on social media platforms. Nicholas Mirzoeff writes that in Gaza, the contrast between the old world and the new one is striking: Distributed social media platforms enabled people to witness the violent punishment for dissent unleashed by a colonial power on the colonised. The live-streamed destruction led to a change in how the world saw Palestinians and the Israeli occupation, which led to global protests and solidarity movements.[3]

In my previous work, I researched play and performance as forms of resistance.[4] When Israel attacked Gaza, I began to follow the events on Instagram, quickly focusing on content featuring children's play and live performances amidst the rubble. With each like and share, I trained algorithms to better understand my preferences. It is crucial to acknowledge algorithmic presence from the outset of this article, as it is undeniably clear that algorithmic agencies direct – both in the sense of guidance and performance. For me, as both a researcher and a human being, not writing about what I see in those posts is not an option. As wars, conflicts and uprisings are increasingly not only witnessed but also performed via social media, understanding the performativity of these contemporary events is important. The internet, and especially social media, is the media of our age, and restricting its usage has become a weapon of oppression.[5]

In this article, I attempt to understand the kinds of performative practices and horizons (of resistance) that can be observed in the (social) media content produced in, from and about Gaza during the genocide. These horizons emerge across various performative spaces and events, ranging from music performances staged amidst rubble to AI-generated social media posts. My focus is on content posted on social media, especially Instagram, though other media are occasionally mentioned, usually in relation to social media. I suggest that social media is a performative space that not only hosts and creates but also distributes, promotes and conceals performances. Hence, all performances discussed in this article are part of the social media stage of the Gaza war. Even if not originally created as social media content, they are nevertheless widely distributed and are thus witnessed

1 See, for example, The Associated Press 2025.

2 Mirzoeff 2025.

3 Mirzoeff 2025.

4 Huuhka 2024.

5 In January 2026, during protests in Iran, internet access was cut to prevent protestors from sharing content documenting governmental violence. See, for example, Christou 2026.

via social media platforms. I strive to understand how performance as a liminal form of human activity can make sense of and produce knowledge of the video streams of the lives of people in liminal places, such as Gaza. As this article represents an initial exploration of this territory, it cannot offer exhaustive conclusions. At this phase, my primary aim is to create a framework for understanding how performance as an act of resistance and resistance as a performative act can be mediated and witnessed.

Some of the people and certainly most of the places featured in my material will be obsolete at the time of publishing this article. The educational system has been decimated,[6] invaluable historical sites and artefacts destroyed[7] and places of worship – both Muslim and Christian – bombed repeatedly.[8] Gaza is a place that is no more; reconstruction is estimated to take years, even decades, and it remains unclear for whom it will be rebuilt.[9] The lives lived and lost have become part of the story of Gaza, and some of them are part of the social media performance staged in our phones. I began to draft this article in May 2025, just after leaked Israeli army plans shocked the world. The aim of occupying most of Gaza permanently and moving the population to its southern border was met with objections from world leaders, but little to no action was taken.[10] Whatever happens in the months to come, there is no denying that Palestinians have endured genocide[11] – the intentional destruction of a people's capacity to exist[12] – since October 2023, with no end for the suffering in sight.

Content from Gaza serves as documentation both by and about people living amidst genocide. As my research focuses on the performance happening on social media, the analysis is already one step removed from the actual realities of the Palestinian people. Here, the role of social media is crucial, as it has become a space where our shared conceptions and opinions of the world are increasingly formed and distributed. It is important to remember, however, that the material discussed in this article offers only a partial standpoint on what happened in Gaza during the genocide. Finally, although this article talks exclusively about Gaza, the processes and activities described are most likely present in other conflict zones as well.

Stage of rubble, stage of protest

I understand performance as a process created within and from the bodies of the participants – both spectators and performers – producing emergent meanings and the performative materiality of the world around them.[13] According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, this nature of performance gives it its transformative power. The transformative power

6 Desai 2024.
7 Knell 2025.
8 Majed, Arnaaout and Chouiref 2025; Cronin 2023; Al Jazeera 2025a; Mulder 2024.
9 Thomson Reuters 2024.
10 BBC News 2025b.
11 Segal 2023; United Nations 2025b.
12 For example, Abourahme 2024.
13 Fischer-Lichte 2008, 181.

of performance enables the reenchantment of the world.[14] When discussing the performances happening in or related to Gaza, we need to distinguish the different spaces of performance. Let us call them stages to remind us of their performative nature.

The first is the actual stage in Gaza, where local people perform for local people. This also includes instances in which the performance is directed solely at the camera. These performances happen in squares, on the beachfront, in houses, in schools and everywhere that is left. Every stage in Gaza is surrounded by rubble, which serves as the governing element of any *mise-en-scène*.

The next stage is mediated through Instagram – the most prominent social media platform and arguably the most powerful – due to its global accessibility and constant availability. Even if some posts or accounts are deleted, the majority of the content has been shared, reshared and assimilated into the Instagram canon. A performance on social media is a mediated, virtualised version of the source performance. The social media stage and the performance on it are a collaboration between multiple agencies. Agency is distributed among the performers and camera operators of the original performance, the people sharing and watching it and, most importantly, non-human agents, such as the algorithms overseeing both the app and the content.

The third stage is the affective one, the stage of grief and suffering, of anger and solidarity, a meta stage forged into the embodied fabric of our humanity. Echoed back in our bodies, the performance enacts change and transforms something in us. In all these stages, and often simultaneously, actions unfold that become mediated, distributed and redistributed as an algorithmic theatre on social media.

Images spread through social media have influenced the emergence of yet another performance stage – that of protest. As mentioned earlier, due to the distributed and live nature of this war, major solidarity movements have emerged globally. Rachel Hann argues that scenography is an integral part of contemporary protest culture, especially those organised by the Occupy movement in the 2010s, or others during which places of power were taken over with temporary settlements, such as tents.[15] Camps are a way of materialising space,[16] as is scenography. Hann argues that "the act of camping and scenography both complicate and 'break into' the established flows and norms of place".[17] Likewise, as in 2024 pro-Palestinian protests that emerged on university campuses worldwide,[18] most of the demonstrations consisted of tents on campus grounds, while in some cases, buildings were temporarily occupied. An example of this is the Hamilton Hall of Columbia University, declared Hind's Hall for 24 hours in May 2024 to honour and

14 Fischer-Lichte 2008, 181.
15 Hann 2019, 113.
16 Hailey 2008, 9.
17 Hann 2019, 114
18 Wikipedia 2025; Ulfelder 2024.

remember the death of six-year-old Hind Rajab.[19] Hind Rajab was murdered alongside five members of her family and two paramedics who had been sent to help after the Palestinian Red Crescent Society received her urgent call for help.[20] The incident received much publicity and disrupted what had been a fairly pro-Israeli consensus throughout the conflict.

Raising flags and renaming places are very performative acts; they reclaim the space and transform it into something else, both materially and conceptually. Judith Butler argues that in demonstrations, bodies form performative alliances through mass transition, such as marches, and thus reclaim the space where this gathering of bodies occurs.[21] In the case of Hind's Hall, the space was reclaimed to express not only compassion but also anger and frustration. Naming a university building after a Palestinian child was a performative act of elevating her to an esteemed position usually reserved for men, such as Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), after whom the building was originally named.[22]

These examples return us to Gaza: As much of it has been levelled, people have been building temporary – or perhaps not so temporary – settlements. Tent encampments now occupy vast stretches of previously undeveloped land, such as beaches. The scenographic imagery is a mix of rubble and tents, destruction and resettlement. Nicholas Mirzoeff has written about his work on Gaza: "Visual activism today is scavenging rubble, whether fragments of words, found video, or material form",[23] and that very much applies to my research on Gaza as well.

The above-mentioned stages are imbricated and simultaneous. Some are temporary, like the protest stage, which appears and disappears as social and political circumstances change, while others, such as the streets and squares of Gaza, are permanent. The stage of rubble will most likely remain for decades, while the stage of grief will deepen and expose the old, now even deeper, wounds beneath the fresh ones. Thus, no analysis of the social media material from Gaza can begin from a neutral position – the scale of human suffering demands that impartiality be abandoned.

Borderland spaces: Life amidst genocide

Since *Nakba*, the catastrophe of 1948, Palestinians have been pushed to the borderlands of expanding Israeli territory. During Nakba, 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes and ended up as refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and around the world.[24] The resulting diaspora is estimated to include nine million Palestinians.[25] Some centres

19 Gregor-Splaver and Lee 2025.

20 Williamson 2024.

21 Butler 2015, 73.

22 Interestingly, Hamilton Hall has history of being renamed. In 1968, it was renamed as "Malcolm X Liberation College" and, in 1985, "Mandela Hall". "1968: The Global Revolutions" n.d.; Lee 2016.

23 Mirzoeff 2025.

24 United Nations 2025a.

25 The Institute for Middle East Understanding 2024.

of population, such as Jabalia, which is located in Gaza, are still called refugee camps, as their residents are descendants of people chased from ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages in 1948.[26] This underlines the temporality of those settlements – not necessarily in reality but at least within the cultural narrative. As Israel pushes to eliminate any possibility for the Palestinian state,[27] Palestinians continue to exist in liminal spaces – in Gaza, in the West Bank, in diaspora and in the never-ending streams of social media.

Even if the liminal space of Gazans does not arise from a community-induced ritual or a rite of passage, Victor Turner's description of liminal entities seems fitting:

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. [--] Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.[28]

For Erika Fischer-Lichte, the liminality of performance is triggered by the collapse of hierarchies and dichotomies, especially the boundaries between real life and art, for example, in performances that include self-harm.[29] The threat of death is always present in my material, either in visual cues, such as rubble or injuries, or in the sounds of bombing. As some of the images circulate and might reach the audience months or even years after being shot or first posted, the people performing or being filmed might not be alive anymore. This very real possibility casts a dark shadow over any potential for hope: The rebellious body may be alive or dead, but in the endless circuit of social media, it keeps performing – keeps repeating the choreography. The borderland between life and death is thus present in all material emerging from Gaza. Finally, the liminality concerns Palestine itself as a potentially sovereign country which, for decades, has been waiting for sufficient recognition and international pressure to secure its independence. In September 2025, several Western countries finally recognised the Palestinian state.[30]

Alongside the liminality of Palestinian realities run the liminal spaces of performances. As Richard Schechner has said, "Performance is not 'in' anything, but 'between'",[31] and in Gaza, it truly happens between – between air strikes, between bombed houses, between life and death, between survival and destruction. Beyond the material stages of performance exist the immaterial stages in which virtual, mediated performances happen. These stages exist in liminal spaces, as they are simultaneously physical and virtual, present and absent at the same time. By adding another layer of liminality, social media keeps performances permanently suspended within liminal spaces. Anything we see has already happened, yet it continues to happen in a never-ending loop, circling from phone to phone, from one user to another. The people in those posts are alive, yet

26 Abdelrazek 2025.
27 McArthur and Donnison 2025.
28 Turner, Abrahams and Harris 1969.
29 Fischer-Lichte 2008, 176.
30 Ali 2025; Demony et al. 2025.
31 Schechner 2013, 30.

they might already be dead, crushed under the buildings, which are also simultaneously still standing and already destroyed. In this sense, although such social media posts are inseparably connected with Gaza and its specific locations and moments, they are also outside time and place. They are neither now nor yet to come, but always already past and always recurring.

Social media as theatre/performance

In her keynote at the annual conference of Nordic Theatre Scholars, Annie Dorsen states that generative artificial intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT, is theatre, but it does not present itself as such.[32] Large language models (LLMs) produce discursive and narrative content but present it under the guise of established fact. It is, however, widely known that LLMs hesitate to admit they are unable to provide a clear answer, which leads them to hallucinate – that is, to fabricate answers that are presented as facts.[33] I expand the notion of theatrical performance to social media as well: Even if most of the content framed as news is "true" or fact based, the form makes us susceptible to accepting content that does not follow any guidelines of journalism.[34] However, content does not necessarily need to be framed as news to distribute information. Much of the pro-Palestinian content is just about showing the reality in Gaza.

Social media is a contemporary medium for the distribution and production of theatre and/or performance. Social media posts are parts of larger assemblages of performances which can be viewed separately or as clusters connected to one another. Depending on one's own views, certain posts can work in several ways, either reinforcing or questioning one's preconceptions. The spectacle of social media consists of streams of images and videos, which are then directed by algorithms to cater to the individual tastes of users. This algorithmic theatre has been shaped to convey stories of life under occupation and, at the same time, the potential of play and art as forms of resistance. The performances are intermedial,[35] as they happen first locally in a physical space and then globally as streamed and digitalised in virtual space. More specifically, they can be understood as live media performances which incorporate real-time media production alongside human input,[36] shifting the focus from the product to the process, with no definable outcome.[37] Even if I present specific posts, they are always just snapshots taken out of the context of the ever-flowing algorithm-generated stream. Live media performances and/or spectacles created with/by algorithmic agents always include both intentional and unintentional elements.[38] The unintentional elements include not only technological failures but also – and more importantly in the case of social media performance – related content, contextual

32 Dorsen 2025.
33 Farquhar et al. 2024.
34 Swart and Broersma 2024.
35 On intermedial performance, see, e.g., Phelan 2003; Kattenbelt 2010; Nelson 2010.
36 Cooke 2010, 194.
37 Scott 2015.
38 Cooke 2010, 200–201.

mismatches and unexpected coincidences.

Meta, the owner of social media platforms Instagram and Facebook, has allegedly restricted the visibility of pro-Palestinian posts by shadow banning content created by Palestinian news outlets and Palestinian and non-Palestinian activists.[39] In 2025, social media activists tried to overcome this limitation by posting selfies and lifestyle images alongside pro-Palestinian texts, as Meta tends to favour and promote less politically charged content. TikTok has been considered the most important social media platform for the Palestinian cause, as pro-Palestinian posts have significantly outnumbered pro-Israeli stances. Researcher Laura Edelson has suggested that the volume of pro-Palestinian engagement on social media has grown organically over time and reflects involvement in social movements, whereas pro-Israeli posts are more often tied to specific events, such as October 7th.[40] As social media is essentially distributed and its content is user created, these platforms have simultaneously restricted and enabled the world's ability to witness genocide and colonialism in action.[41]

The material emerging from Gaza has indeed been so impactful that claims of crisis actors pretending to be dead Palestinians have become increasingly popular on social media platforms. The term "Pallywood", originating in 2005, has been widely deployed to downplay the number of civilian casualties. Videos and pictures of actual deceased Palestinians have been framed as staged "Oscar-worthy" performances; However, the majority, if not all, of these claims have been debunked by fact checkers.[42]

Social media has an air of urgency and liveness, regardless of the age of the content. Things often resurface: Images or other content might be forgotten for years and then later become relevant due to some shift in culture. For example, the racist and misogynist statements of famous people might surface years later, and in the case of Palestine, older anti-Palestinian views of Israeli leaders or even common people have been brought to light. This phenomenon is not exclusive to social media, but on these platforms, the timeline frequently becomes distorted and difficult to reconstruct. In a conflict like the Gaza war, images from throughout the duration of the conflict become tangled with one another, forming continuations and narratives unrelated to the original posts. This is the work of algorithms as the director; they have the ability to arrange and rearrange streams of images, altering conceptions of time and place.

AI-created images and videos have also become part of social media performances. For example, in May 2024, an AI-created image depicting refugee tents organised to spell "All eyes on Rafah" was shared 47 million times on Instagram within just two days of a deadly air strike directed at the Rafah tent camp.[43] The air strike killed at least 45 civilians and sparked global outrage, which resulted in a flood of social media statements.[44] In an article by BBC News, an interviewed researcher stated that AI-created images were probably

39 Mirzoeff 2025.
40 Edelson 2024.
41 Mirzoeff 2025.
42 Bond 2023; Bullens 2023; Reuters Fact Check 2023.
43 Davies 2024.
44 McKernan 2024.

easier to share than the actual distressing and violent images from Gaza. An AI-created image thus became a symbol of the nightmares of Rafah and Gaza as a whole, drawing significant criticism for sanitising the horrors of genocide in pursuit of more aesthetically curated social media feeds.[45] Some other instances of clear AI-generated images have been documented, while some have been debunked.[46] Deepfake pictures from Gaza still seem to be a minor phenomenon, as most major news outlets use pictures from local journalists. In addition, for this research, the origin of an image is somewhat irrelevant, as all images become part of the social media performance, with all being parts of a bigger whole and all becoming part of the web of competing narratives.

Another widely circulated example of AI-created content was a video featuring "Trump Gaza", shared by US President Donald Trump in February 2025.[47] The video was originally created as a satirical joke for a closed audience following Trump's suggestion to take Gaza under US control, but it went viral.[48] It shows Gaza turning into a Las Vegas-like resort, where Trump enjoys drinks by the pool with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as bearded ladies dance on the beach and all trace of the Palestinian population and heritage has been erased. Solo Avital, the creator of the video, did not release it, as he was worried about repercussions from the Trump administration. However, the reality was the opposite as the video was embraced by the president. The Israeli government has used millions of euros on advertisements on Google, and some of them feature a similar utopic/dystopic scenario: Gaza as an amazing beach resort without Hamas or Palestinian people for that matter.[49] Thus, alternative dystopic narratives are created, appropriated and adapted to promote colonialist agendas.

Performances created and performed in Gaza travel through different media: from human bodies through cameras, then through servers and platforms into devices, and finally back to human bodies. Experiences and affects are transferred through broken connections; they pass through borders and borderlands, transforming themselves and transforming others along the way. The above-mentioned examples illustrate the potential threat that AI-generated images can pose. Although these examples were clearly AI-generated and treated as such, they received significantly greater visibility on social media than human-produced images did – that is, actual photography work. Thus, as the volume of more readily consumable yet equally evocative AI content increases, it is bound to affect our conceptions of reality. And in the case of social media, which is known for the performance of authenticity – even if this authenticity has always been edited – the whole idea of horizontal networks, of peers, is challenged. However, in the case of social media as performance, this distorts perspectives and shifts agential power towards non-human entities.

45 Davies 2024.
46 Tuquero 2025; Walter 2024; Marchant de Abreu 2025.
47 McCammon 2025.
48 BBC News 2025a.
49 Helin and Mäntymaa 2025.

The soundscape of control

The intertwinement of war and technology is clear in Gaza and the West Bank. For decades, both have been testing sites for not only weapons but also facial recognition systems, databases and other AI-powered tools of control.[50] Some of these have been gamified to enhance efficiency, incentivising Israeli soldiers to collect greater amounts of Palestinian biodata.[51] Palestinians are under complete surveillance; checkpoints have been used to divide people and space in both Gaza and the West Bank for decades. Since October 2023, an army of drones has joined the forces of the Israeli optical regime; the constant buzz of drones watching all that happens in Gaza can be heard in the videos.[52] Drones track people, mark targets and conduct surveillance. In April 2024, there were reports of drones playing cries of women and children to lure men out of their tents to be targeted and shot at.[53] Thus, drones are made to perform becoming robotic actors in a dystopian performance. In October 2024, drone footage released by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) featured Hamas leader Yahua Sinwar's final moments. Sitting in an armchair in a destroyed apartment building, an injured man throws a stick towards the drone before the building is struck by a final shell. Sinwar was wearing a keffiyeh, a traditional Middle Eastern scarf that has become the symbol of Palestinian cause. This video was shared to show defeat and humiliation, but it was also seen as an act of final defiance in the face of unavoidable death and the enemy.[54]

Sinwar's stick has since become a symbol of resistance, of an unyielding attitude in front of the oppressor. It also demonstrates the contrast between high technology and the absence of technology: Drones are used as weapons of war because they are highly manoeuvrable and reduce the possibility of casualties on the attacking side. A stick, on the other hand, is completely useless against most threats. A faceless, AI-aided attack force against a single wounded man with a stick creates a strong visual image of resistance, resonating with popular culture references, such as the 1999 dystopian science fiction movie *The Matrix*. In a demonstration in Morocco, people were dressed as Sinwar, sitting in an armchair and replicating the IDF footage.[55] An image was circulated: From flesh and blood through virtual realms to flesh and blood again. It is a harrowing example of the power of performance – a resurrection of a leader variously described as a terrorist or a resistance fighter, from would-be oblivion back to the centre of attention.

Certain social media posts and performances are caught by the algorithms and thus made more visible and accessible than others. One such example is the video of music teacher Ahmed "Muin" Abu Amsha and his pupils from the music group Gaza Birds Singing[56] chanting to the buzz of drones, which has appeared in my feed several times, shared

50 Nezirevic 2024; Kennard 2016.
51 Robins-Early 2024.
52 Mirzoeff 2025.
53 Hussaini 2024.
54 Leatherby, Mellen and Toler 2024.
55 El Atti 2024.
56 Songs from the Rubble.

by different accounts. In the video, Abu Amsha picks up the tune from the drone's buzz and starts to sing; then, one after another, the children join him. The stage is a destroyed corner of a building, with cloth draped around and above the choir to form a makeshift tent. In the background, we see rubble, concrete and metal bars protruding from the shells of destroyed buildings.[57] This video has been framed and re-framed, circulated with and without contextual explanation, and picked up by several news outlets.[58] It has become an example of several things – the reality of living under constant auditory threat, the resilience of Palestinian students and teachers and the power of performance, especially as an act of resistance.

The buzz of drones is a defining feature of the soundscape of videos from Gaza. The buzz is present in all the videos that feature everyday life under occupation. It frames every moment with the looming threat of deadly surveillance systems. The act of turning this sound of imminent danger into music is resistance in its purest form. It demonstrates the transformative power of performance that Fischer-Lichte talks about: For a moment, the rubble stage is elevated, the starving children singing embody resistance and resilience. In this video, there are no casualties, no blood, no amputations – just a teacher, children and a stage of destruction. Performance has the power to engage viewers in a manner that is impossible otherwise. Art, even when happening in a place like Gaza, is detached from everyday horrors, and thus these types of social media content are easier to watch, like and share. Algorithms read increased engagement and spread it even further. In my stream, this particular video has become an object of repetition. As such, it shapes the perception and narrative of the Palestinian people.

Nevertheless, even as a somewhat sterilised example, the video builds a powerful narrative of resistance by reclaiming a soundscape designed to terrify. This performance exemplifies a liminal space within the broader liminality of Gaza itself: A small, secluded nook of rubble where an activity transforms its participants and its surroundings. These examples show how performances on social media take a path of their own and how algorithmic forces shape our perceptions. The power of performance is transformative in nature,[59] and the images from Gaza have profoundly transformed me. They have surrounded me with brutal and violent imagery – the very worst of humanity, unimaginable suffering and scenes from nightmares – yet also with a flicker of light in the darkness. That flicker is human resilience: People dancing amid the rubble, singing songs of rebellion to the sound of bombardment.

Thinking of magma

At the outset of the article, I aim to identify the practices and horizons of performance and resistance emerging from (social) media streams. I have outlined a few, but exhaustive listings of such practices are far beyond the scope of this article. As the examples high-

57 *Sheel Sheel Ya Jamali Sheel – Over Drone* 2025.

58 See, for example, Salvador 2025; Al Jazeera 2025b; Evans 2025; Khurana 2025.

59 Fischer-Lichte 2008, 181.

light, the events in Gaza are performative in many ways. Their live distribution on (social) media requires events to be directed and framed, creating shareable and re-shareable scenes that construct realities of resistance, suffering and humanness. Such performances deepen our understanding of life under occupation and genocide.

For me, the most important concern is the perpetuity of the Palestinian people. Social media performance, as discussed in this article, draws attention to the suffering of the people of Gaza and highlights their resiliency and courage. The liminal space of performance doubles as a liminal space of resistance, where the possibility of liberation is ever present, if not yet materialised. Interwoven into the mesh of videos and becoming part of the unending assemblage of content, the trace of such performances will never disappear. Unlike physical structures, this trace cannot be demolished as an act of propaganda. Even if all of Gaza is erased, the glimpses of those lives under occupation that have been shared with the world cannot be.

To better understand the ways in which these performances of resistance linger in our joint consciousness, I will turn to Cornelius Castoriadis's concept of *magma*. Castoriadis uses magma in two interconnected ways. Firstly, magma as an ontological concept describes the world as undetermined, stratified and processual. Secondly, and more specifically in the context of this article, magma as a social concept describes the ways in which we understand and create meanings of our surroundings, the ways we as humans form our societies and institutions.[60] For Castoriadis, social imaginary significations are organised in a unique manner; like magma, they contain things and systems but are never reducible to those things or sets of systems.[61] The magma of a specific society's social imaginary significations cannot be traced back to any specific intentions or actions, individual or collective, as those individuals and collectives are already shaped by that magma. There is no founding moment to be found.[62] Castoriadis writes,

> The socialization process is at work and at stake in and through the process of bestowing signification. Society is primarily a magma of social imaginary significations that make collective and individual life meaningful. Consequently, socialization is nothing other than entering – and functioning within – that instituted magma of social significations.[63]

This understanding of magma as both containing and exceeding its constituent parts has broader implications. The magma of any society forms around specific social imaginary significations, potentially expressed through art, architecture, discourses, technologies, political institutions, social institutions, religion and so on. According to Mats Rosengren, the concept of magma allows us to understand and discuss embodied knowledge.[64]

60 Rosengren 2014, 65.
61 Castoriadis 1997, 12–13.
62 Rosengren 2014, 70.
63 Castoriadis 2007, 216.
64 Rosengren 2014, 72.

Let us return to Gaza and the social construct that is the Palestinian state. What exists in these liminal spaces? Are they places where whole nations, whole peoples and whole cultures wait for recognition or for destruction? It is rather here that a magma of social imaginary significations flows faster and more intensely than ever; it is where the magma of Palestinian society, resistance and existence boils and bubbles. If we think of the resilience of the Palestinian people, it is perhaps magma that keeps the Palestinian resistance so strong, for the magma of a displaced and oppressed people cannot be destroyed by tanks and bombs. As it has no origin, it cannot have an end. Perhaps it is a quality shared by all resistances and revolutions. In some cases, it would be easier to yield to oppression, but even if bodies succumb, the magma of the people lingers in our collective cultural memory.

Finally, I would like to emphasise the importance of approaching this topic through performance studies. As our decade is marked by the emergence of AI-created content, fact and fiction have become more entangled than at any previous point in the history of information technologies. Thus, all content on social media is performative, even if this quality remains largely unacknowledged. If we focus solely on commercial content provided by influencers, perhaps we can embrace its performative elements. However, when wars are waged on the basis of fictional stories disguised as fact, the stakes of performativity become considerably more serious. Who has the right to appear on the world stage and on what terms? Which lives are worthy of being performed and mourned publicly? While this article has focused on Gaza, it is not only Gazan lives that have been excluded from the sphere of the grievable.

Marleena Huuhka is a postdoctoral researcher at Tampere University. Her research focuses on performance and play as practices of resistance.

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