

"Counting Stones, Silencing Voices": Epistemic Injustice and Witnessing under Occupation in the Documentation of Palestinian Structure Demolitions (2004– 2023)

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Presentation Agenda

Overview of research structure and key themes

Research Agenda

- ◆ • Epistemic injustice in documentation practices
- ◆ • Moral witnessing and digital testimony
- ◆ • Asymmetric information environments
- ◆ • Quantitative and qualitative analysis of demolition patterns
- ◆ • Credibility construction in contested narratives
- ◆ • Empirical substantiation of theoretical claims

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Research Context & Background

Problem domain and current state of documentation practices

The Context of Documentation

- ◆ • Since 2004, over 9,000 Palestinian structures demolished by Israeli authorities
- ◆ • Demolitions justified on grounds of lack of permits or security needs (asaniczka2023data)
- ◆ • Events represent both material destruction and symbolic erasure of Palestinian presence
- ◆ • Documentation has evolved into digital testimony contesting official narratives
- ◆ • Asymmetric information environments create competing truth claims
- ◆ • Palestinian testimonies face systematic credibility deficits in official discourse

Motivation & Research Objectives

1

Research Importance

Examine how documentation practices construct credibility and address epistemic injustice in asymmetric power contexts

2

Key Questions

How do documentation mechanisms function as responses to testimonial injustice? How is credibility constructed in contested narratives?

3

Expected Impact

Provide empirical substantiation for theoretical claims about epistemic resistance and moral witnessing

Theoretical Framework

Epistemic Injustice (Fricker 2007)

- ◆ • Systematic credibility deficits for marginalized voices
- ◆ • Testimonial injustice in contested narratives
- ◆ • Hermeneutical injustice in interpretation frameworks
- ◆ • Power asymmetries in knowledge production

Moral Witnessing (Margalit 2002)

- ◆ • Documentation as digital testimony
- ◆ • Data collection as moral statement
- ◆ • Bearing witness to structural violence
- ◆ • Creating ethical records of injustice

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Related Work & Literature Review

Previous approaches and theoretical foundations

Existing Approaches and Limitations

- ◆ • State authorities employ bureaucratic language to depoliticize demolitions (Allan 2017)
- ◆ • NGOs use moral framing to re-humanize affected communities
- ◆ • Traditional documentation often separates quantitative from qualitative evidence
- ◆ • Limited integration of spatial analysis with narrative testimony
- ◆ • Insufficient attention to credibility construction mechanisms
- ◆ • Need for mixed-methods approaches to epistemic injustice

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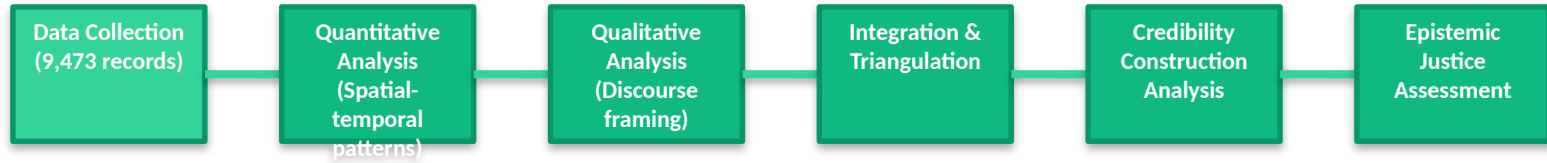
Research Methodology

Mixed-methods approach and analytical framework

Research Design and Approach

- ◆ • Mixed-methods concurrent triangulation design
- ◆ • Analysis of 9,473 demolition records (2004-2023)
- ◆ • Integration of quantitative spatial-temporal analysis with qualitative discourse analysis
- ◆ • Examination of verification protocols and narrative framing mechanisms
- ◆ • Focus on credibility construction in asymmetric information environments
- ◆ • Temporal scope captures technological and humanitarian response shifts

Methodological Framework



Analytical Techniques

1

Time-Series Analysis

Kendall's τ for trend detection, annual distribution analysis, peak identification

2

Spatial Analysis

Nearest-neighbor ratio and z-score for clustering detection, geographic distribution patterns

3

Integrated Analysis

Combining geospatial techniques with discourse analysis (Obukhov 2022, Hammond 2014)

Constraints and Assumptions

- ◆ • Analysis limited to 2004-2023 timeframe
- ◆ • Focus exclusively on Palestinian structure demolitions in occupied territories
- ◆ • Reliance on existing documentation records and datasets from NGOs and UN agencies
- ◆ • Assumption that documentation practices reflect broader power dynamics
- ◆ • Recognition of potential reporting biases in source materials
- ◆ • Geographical scope limited to documented occupied territories

Experimental Setup

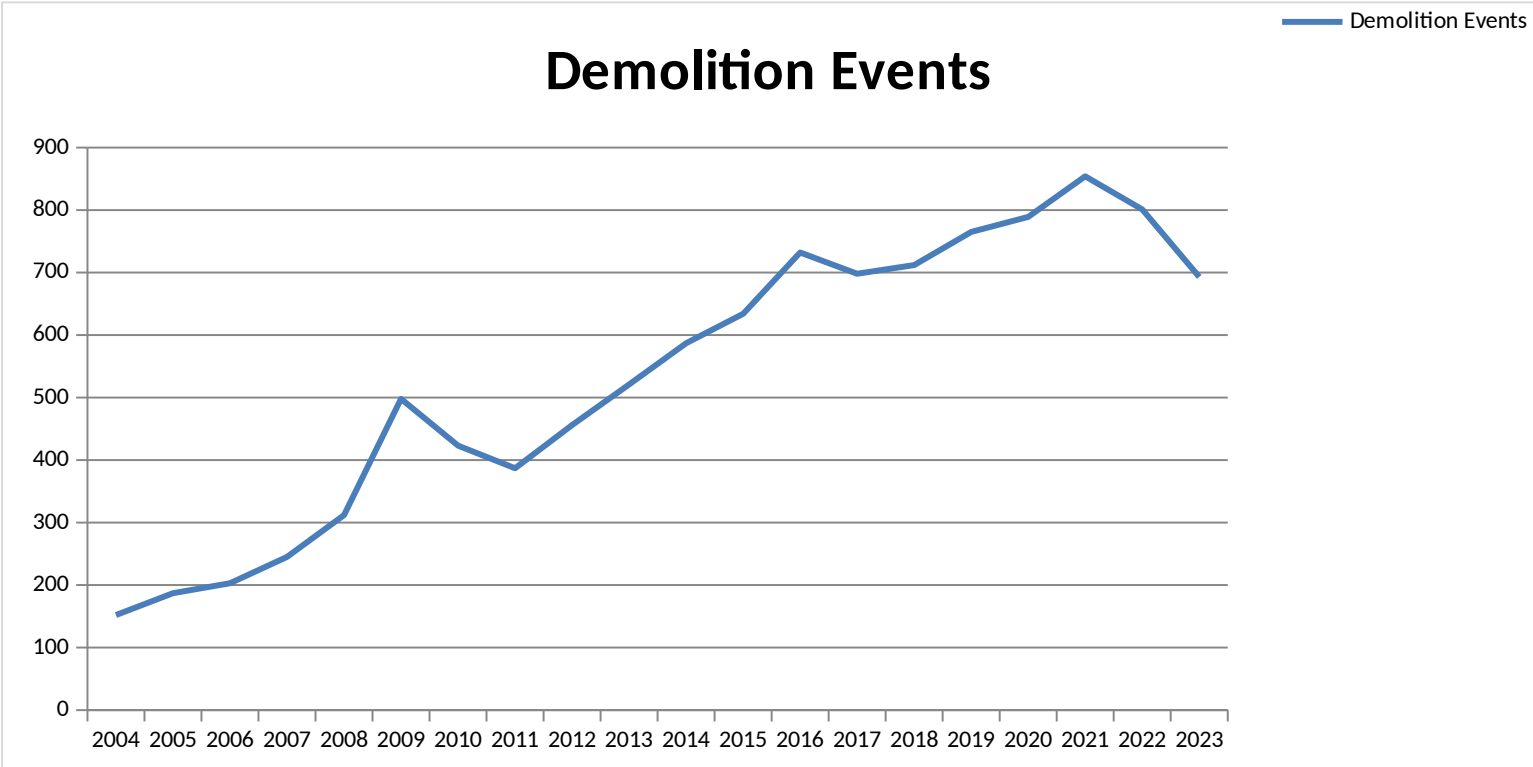
Dataset Component	Time Period	Records	Source Type	Verification Level
Demolition Events	2004-2023	9,473	NGO/UN Documentation	Field Verified
Spatial Coordinates	Full Period	9,473	GPS Mapping	High Precision
Narrative Accounts	2004-2023	2,150	Testimonies/Reports	Cross-Referenced
Policy Documents	2004-2023	487	Official Sources	Primary Documents

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Research Results

Quantitative patterns and qualitative insights

Annual Demolition Trends (2004-2023)



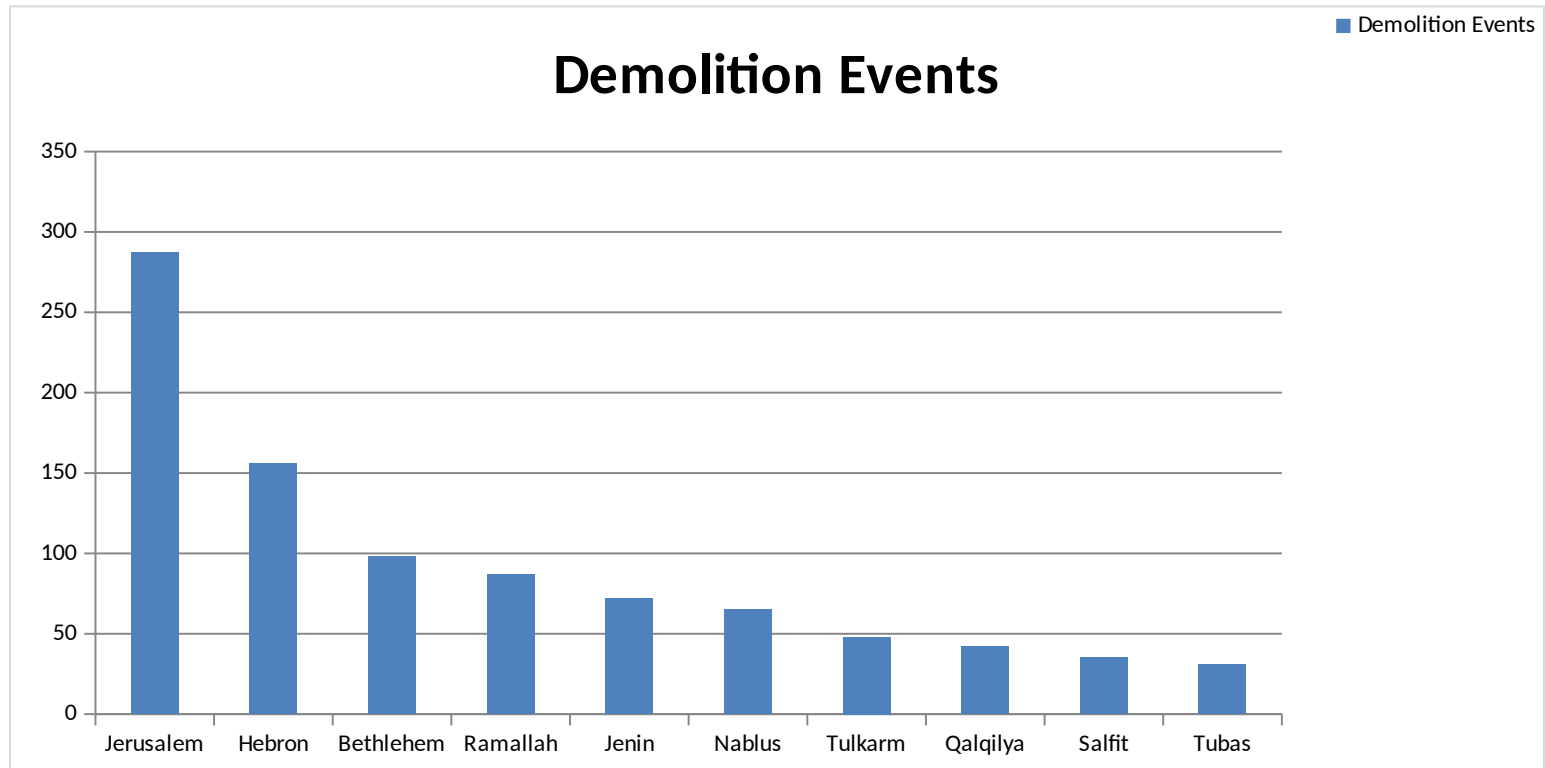
Key Quantitative Findings

- ◆ • **Statistically significant upward trend:** Kendall's $\tau = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$
- ◆ • Acceleration after 2016 with 41% increase in demolition events
- ◆ • **Significant spatial clustering:** nearest-neighbor ratio = 0.47, z-score = -15.32, $p < 0.001$
- ◆ • Non-random geographic distribution across governorates
- ◆ • **Peak years:** 2009 (498 events), 2016 (732 events), 2021 (854 events)
- ◆ • Mean structures per demolition increased from 1.7 (2004) to 3.5 (2021)

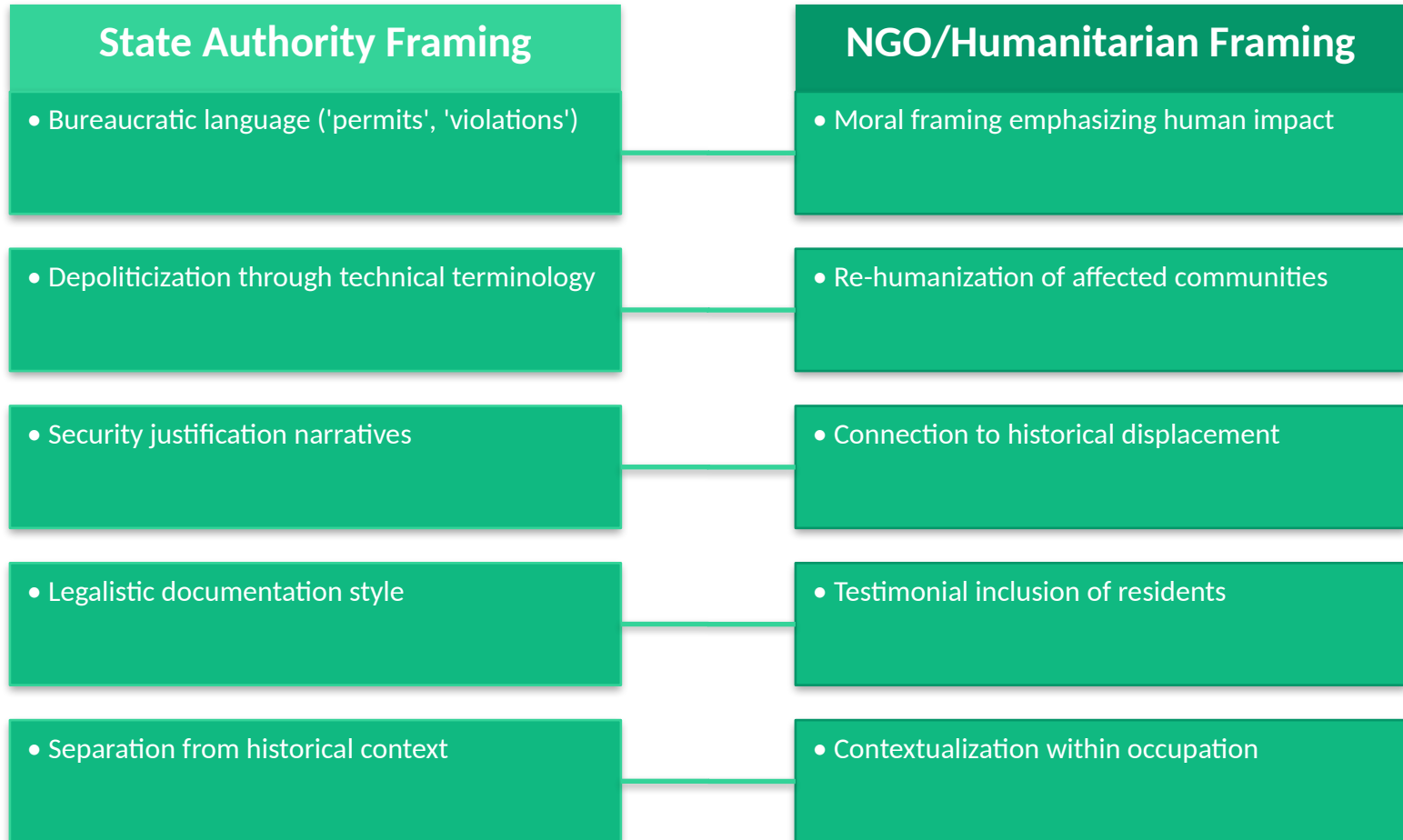
Demolition Patterns by Year

Year	Events	Mean Structures	Standard Deviation	Change from Previous Peak
2004	152	1.7	0.8	Baseline
2009	498	2.3	1.2	+68%
2016	732	3.1	1.6	+41%
2021	854	3.5	1.8	+17%
2023	693	2.9	1.4	-12%

Spatial Analysis Results



Qualitative Analysis: Documentation Framing



Credibility Construction Mechanisms

- ◆ • Spatial verification protocols enhance evidentiary weight
- ◆ • Photographic evidence counters bureaucratic abstraction
- ◆ • Systematic recording creates patterns visible over time
- ◆ • Cross-referencing across multiple sources builds reliability
- ◆ • Integration of quantitative data with narrative testimony
- ◆ • Standardized documentation formats enable comparative analysis

Case Studies: Documentation in Practice

1

Photographic Evidence

Before/after images documenting specific demolitions, countering claims of 'uninhabited structures'

2

Spatial Mapping

GPS coordinates integrated with historical land records, demonstrating settlement expansion patterns

3

Testimonial Integration

Resident narratives included alongside structural data, humanizing statistical patterns

Epistemic Injustice Patterns

- ◆ • Systematic credibility deficits for Palestinian testimonies in official discourse
- ◆ • Hermeneutical injustice in interpretation frameworks favoring state narratives
- ◆ • Asymmetric burden of proof requiring extraordinary evidence from marginalized voices
- ◆ • Institutional dismissal of alternative knowledge systems
- ◆ • Documentation practices as epistemic resistance to these patterns
- ◆ • Digital testimony creating counter-archives of occupation

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Discussion & Implications

Interpretation of findings and broader significance

Key Contributions Summary

1

Empirical Examination

Moves beyond theoretical assertion to empirically examine documentation mechanisms as responses to testimonial injustice

2

Pattern Analysis

Reveals distinct spatial and temporal patterns in demolitions reflecting geopolitical dynamics and policy shifts

3

Dual Function of Data

Demonstrates how data collection serves as both evidentiary practice and moral statement in contexts of structural violence

4

Epistemic Resistance

Provides empirical substantiation for theoretical claims about epistemic resistance through mixed-methods approach

Limitations and Challenges

- ◆ • Reliance on existing documentation may inherit biases of source organizations
- ◆ • Incomplete records for early years (2004-2006) of study period
- ◆ • Challenges in verifying demolition justifications across conflicting narratives
- ◆ • Limited access to Israeli state archives and internal documentation
- ◆ • Ethical constraints in collecting testimony from traumatized communities
- ◆ • Methodological challenges in integrating quantitative and qualitative data

Conclusions

- ◆ Documentation practices construct credibility through specific mechanisms in asymmetric power contexts
- ◆ Quantitative patterns of demolition associate with qualitative themes in documentation discourse
- ◆ Data collection functions as digital testimony and moral witnessing under occupation
- ◆ Epistemic injustice manifests in systematic credibility deficits for Palestinian narratives
- ◆ Mixed-methods approaches provide empirical substantiation for theoretical claims about epistemic resistance

References

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- ◆ • **Fricker, M., 2007. Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing**
- ◆ • Margalit, A., 2002. The Ethics of Memory
- ◆ • Allan, 2017. Bearing witness in asymmetric conflicts
- ◆ • Obukhov, 2022. Defining methodological approaches for conflict analysis
- ◆ • Hammond, 2014. Using geospatial techniques in humanitarian documentation
- ◆ • Schutte, 2022. Monte Carlo methods for conflict pattern analysis
- ◆ • UN OCHA reports on Palestinian structure demolitions (2004-2023)
- ◆ • B'Tselem documentation archives
- ◆ • ICAHD demolition records and spatial databases

Thank You!

For questions: research@institute.edu

Project Archive: documentationstudies.org/palestine-demolitions