Lives Shaping Works Making Life is a collection of 24 transcribed public conversations titled *Practices: Strategies and Tactics*, led by Xavier Le Roy and hosted by the *Institute for Applied Theater Studies* in Giessen between November 2022 and November 2024. These dialogues bring together artists, cultural workers, and curators, creating a space where Xavier Le Roy engages in conversation with each guest.

Each encounter follows the same set of 14 questions—printed on the book's cover—which serve as a flexible framework guiding the conversations. Through the careful editing of Giulia Casartelli, Daniel Cordova, and Livia Andrea Piazza, these conversations have been transformed into vivid, polyphonic texts that invite further reflection and offer a point of departure for expanding the dialogue beyond the original live encounters.

Conversations with Antonia Baehr, Matthias Mohr, João Fiadeiro, Herbordt/Mohren, Carolina Mendonça, Rolf Michenfelder, Ana Vujanović, Bojana Cvejić, Joana Tischkau, Giulia Casartelli, Susanne Zaun and Judith Altmeyer, Florence Lam, Olivia Hyunsin Kim, Jorge Alencar and Neto Machado, Rabih Mroué, Ruth Geiersberger, Swoosh Lieu, Arkadi Zaides, Valeria Graziano, Mette Edvardsen, Mala Kline, Sarah Parolin, Andros Zins-Browne, Rose Beermann

Draft version of a conversation between Xavier Le Roy and Arkadi Zaides
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Arkadi Zaides
choreographer, performer, and researcher
This public conversation took place on January 31st, 2024.

Xavier Le Roy Have you chosen the profession you work in? How?

Arkadi Zaides Do you want the long or the short version?

XLR The long one.

AZ Are you sure? [Laughs] That's a difficult question. When I was 11, I immigrated to Israel-Palestine, so there's this long period of 25 years living there. I started dancing as a way to assimilate myself. At the age of 13, while in school, I joined a folk-dance group. That was the first encounter with dance. But I didn't really ask myself the question you're asking me now until I was around 27.

XLR If you would work as a dancer.

AZ Yes, a dancer and choreographer. By then, I already built a career as a dancer with Batsheva Dance Company and other companies. But it was only after leaving Batsheva and after three years of working independently that I had a moment to figure out whether I could actually make a living from this. Things started to move forward. It wasn't stable yet, but I made the decision to try to make it sustainable for myself. I come from a migrant background, so I never asked my parents for help. It was also about simply making a living.

XLR Did you consider dancing in Batsheva or other groups not your work?

AZ It was work, but it felt like I was there “at the service of,” fulfilling someone else’s vision. As a dancer, I felt the urge to create my own work, but I also questioned, “Can I do it? And how?”

XLR How did you get interested in art and decide to make or not to make a living out of it? How does this decision affect the content of your works?

AZ There’s my mother—she is a great lover of art. She studied in Saint Petersburg during her university years and saw a lot of dance there.

XLR The very known ballet.

AZ When I was a child, I was never taken to these events, and after we immigrated, this became impossible—my parents were struggling to make a living. But there was this background of a past golden era, a kind of magic.

XLR You heard her talking about this.

AZ Yes. She didn't talk about it often, but it was a very important moment in her life—something she passed on to me.

XLR But she was not dancing herself.

AZ Not at all. I think she also saw immigration as an opportunity to build something better for her children—she really tried to encourage me. When I started going to this folk dance group and suddenly said, “maybe I want to major in dance and arts at school,” there was also her...

XLR Because you were enjoying dance.

AZ I don’t know if I was enjoying it, but it was a way of connecting. It’s complex. You’re an outsider, and this was a key that could help you enter a certain milieu. And I was also kind of good at it. So, I majored in art and dance—I was the only one in my school who wanted to do both, and they found a way. There was encouragement at home and very positive feedback from the school. I was the first boy to join a contemporary dance program at school. There were different things at play.

XLR In which city was this?

AZ Well, it wasn’t a city. We were living in a temporary village made up entirely of migrants, with all the complexities that come with that. And for me, it brought a lot of complexities. It was that place of marginalization, and school became my escape. Then, of course, came the question of the Israeli army. I didn’t do it. This was a moment of realization… Well, now there is more access to information, but figuring out how not to do it at that time was very complex.

XLR Can you say a little bit more about it?

AZ Yes. It’s obligatory for both men and women from the age of 18—three years for men, two years for women. You can do two more years, depending on your role in the system. At the time, my political views were not so clear. I was still figuring out my way as a migrant in this country. Maybe I couldn’t verbalize it, but there was a gut feeling that told me I could not join that system.

XLR But was it possible not to do it?

AZ It's very complicated not to do it. I did it by claiming a mental disorder. Well, it's not something that you just claim. You have to convince the people interviewing that they'd better not take you, because you don't know what might happen. [Laughs] It sounds funny, but there was a very specific state that I was in because I had to navigate a system where this act was not common. Now it's a bit more present, and there's more media coverage around these cases and information one might find online.

XLR And by not joining the army, you could also pursue dancing.

AZ Yes. It was also a very pragmatic relation to it: I did not say, "Ah! I want to become a dancer." It was more like, "I enjoy doing this. I don't want to do that." I heard somewhere that you have to go to a psychiatrist, there's someone you pay, and they forge a certificate saying you need medicine. You navigate on very shaky ground through this maze. Art was there partly as an excuse, partly as a survival tool, partly my ticket to somewhere else. Some people can do their art in the army. You can dance or be in an orchestra or a choir, and somehow maintain your practice. I tried to be accepted to these "legions" but was not accepted. You have to go through an audition, I did that, it didn't work. So, I tried to see if another way would work.

XLR So you managed to continue your education in dance.

AZ Well, no. After school, I immediately started as a professional. I worked with an independent choreographer, Noa Dar, for a few months right after I moved to Tel Aviv, and half a year later, I joined the junior company of Batsheva. It seemed that what I had was enough to work.

XLR Which also comes with making a living. How long were you in the junior company?

AZ Two and a half years. And then two and a half years in the senior company. After that, I started to be recognized on the international scene with my independent work. In Israel, it's a bit like the American system—when you perform your work, you have to rent the space, pay everyone, and find the audience. Being independent, it's rare that a festival invites and pays you. I started to get funded and initiated performances in different venues, but I eventually saw how the artists' labor was being exploited to maintain that system where the makers themselves actually end up with nothing.

XLR Could you live from your independent work despite all this?

AZ Yes, but it's precarious. Artists are the last in the chain, even though they are the ones who do the work for which these institutions were created and given resources. It was an ongoing point of friction for me. I was involved in discussions, went to the Ministry of Culture, and tried to address what wasn't working, also because I saw other models when working internationally. And then I moved to France, which is a very privileged place in that sense. There is this artist status, so your time is appreciated even when you're not on stage or in a rehearsing studio. You're given a fee for the days when you're not working. It's a very different context, which allows me to do what I'm doing and live from it.

XLR So this friction made you go away.

AZ My decision to leave was related to the political situation in a country that is occupying and exploiting others. I was looking at these mechanisms and seeing where they place the individual. Those reflections pushed me to finally take the decision to leave.

XLR We can shortly say something about this system in France, the so-called *intermittence du spectacle*, which allows you to live from your work.

AZ It's a kind of special unemployment status for artists and related service providers (technicians, producers) who are working independently. In my association, we struggle financially, but through this support, I cost less than my production manager, who is on a salary, and that helps the structure sustain itself. It's a micro-ecosystem that you have to manage.

XLR Because you still need to make income for the association. Could you describe some practices related to your work?

AZ Because of the precariousness when I started to work independently, I had to do everything by myself. I know how to build a budget, to work with Photoshop—because I had to design posters. I started a mailing list. After 20 years, I still add new contacts myself. I update the website myself. Maybe it's just stubbornness, wanting to do things my way, but also an acknowledgement that what I do won't reach the masses, so I have to create the ground for it to take place. Because of the sensitivity of the topics that I'm working with, I'm writing the newsletter myself. I do have a person that builds its general lines and finally sends it, but we work together to make the writing precise. It's about keeping track of the details, because there is a very specific politics involved in what is communicated externally. I feel a heavy responsibility to be precise on the frequency that is transmitted. So, a lot of this labor is actually what I find myself doing most of my time—I would say 80% of my time is this kind of maintenance work.

For example, I'm in the final phase of a new creation, and it's the first time in my life that a venue has given us a series of residencies in the same place, where I can actually put my stuff. I've been working independently for more than 20 years, and I still don't have the privilege of putting my bag down somewhere… The percentage of creative work is very small.

XLR How would you describe the artistic practices? With an understanding that the border may be not so...

AZ Exactly**,** I do see all these practices as creative. I hesitated because there is indeed no clear cut. But "artistic" is when we actually have the privilege to work in the studio together with my collaborators, making decisions collectively. I work a lot with documentary elements and materials, so there's this navigation through a maze of information, often working alone. And then, there are these moments when points connect—when things that you've been thinking about for a long time suddenly come together in the studio, through exchange with others you invite to the journey.

XLR So conversation is one of the practices. I imagine that in the Batsheva Dance Company, there was a dance class to enable the body to work in a certain way. Is there something similar in your work that would be transversal to different projects? Or is it something that you need to rethink every time?

AZ Conversation is a constant mode. A big part of the process is talking around the table, sometimes because we don't succeed in getting a proper studio. Now I've started going to Berlin, where Igor Dobričić, the dramaturg I've been working with in all of my recent projects, lives, and we meet in his apartment. We begin by discussing a chosen topic.

I don't perform well for the system because I don't execute predefined concepts—where you state from the outset that there will be two dancers, three musicians, etc. That's never how I work, and it also takes longer. For example, Emma Gioia, who is with me on stage in *Necropolis*, was a student of

Igor. At the beginning of the process Igor told me I should meet her. So, this way, the team is built gradually. I didn't determine the process from the start. This also means I don't fit neatly into the system that wants to know exactly what it's getting—a clear recipe that can be packaged into a nicely written concept. Things develop step by step.

XLR If you sent a video of the piece that you still have to make, they would be very happy.

AZ Exactly. Another ongoing practice is talking to institutions, to funding bodies—they need to understand that dynamic. To say, "We're not producing one work a year, but over three years," or "We don't know when it will be finished, but we want to start."

XLR Would you consider your work/practice political? Why? [Laughs in the audience]

AZ [Laughs] No, I'm completely apolitical.

XLR Your answer can also be very short.

AZ Yes.

XLR [Laughs in the audience] But I'm curious about how.

AZ The long version again? Okay. How do I begin? So, folk dancing—even Batsheva—was still part of a phase where I didn't understand fully where I had landed in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian context. That actually changed when I was working with a friend who had a connection to the Palestinian community—the 48ers, Palestinians living within the so-called borders of Israel. Together, we initiated several projects for kids in Palestinian and Druze villages around 2007-8. This was when I decided to...

XLR Move.

AZ No, to do it as a profession. The move from Israel-Palestine came in 2015. This also brings us to the present—it was exactly during the time of the disengagement from Gaza, funnily enough. While this was happening, we were working with the children in two villages, one in the Golan Heights and one in Galilee. Then the first assault on Gaza happened, in which 1,166 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, and 13 Israelis. While I was working with the Palestinian population inside Israel, I was able to witness what was happening firsthand—to see, to hear. I was exposed to narratives I had never encountered before as an Israeli. So, it was really...

XLR Could you mention one example of a narrative?

AZ I don't know if you're all familiar with this. It might take some time to explain. Inside the so-called borders of Israel, 20% of the population is Palestinian. And both in Israel and in the Occupied Territories, there are different statuses of "what it means to be Palestinian." It's very much tied to freedom—or the lack of it—the freedom of movement, who can go where.

XLR Depending on the status.

AZ Yes. There is a big difference between the Palestinians who are part of this 20%—their freedom of movement is quite similar to that of Israelis, we are neighbors. Across the city where my mother lives, for example, there is a Palestinian village. And then there's the situation of the people of Gaza, who are completely caged in this enclave. In between, there are many other statuses, each determining where you can and cannot go.

XLR And your experience with the children was...

AZ From the 20% who are my neighbors. Their perspective is what I want to highlight—because it's different, of course, from the others. One of the narratives I heard from them, for example, was about being excluded from access to a public swimming pool. Galilee is made up of small villages, each with different communities. They didn't have a swimming pool in their village, but there was one just 10-15 minutes away, in an Israeli village, and they weren't allowed in.

Or, another example: I was working with a friend, Rabeah Morkus Roby, a Palestinian artist, who founded a dance studio for kids in her village. She told me about a girl she really supported, super talented, but that girl couldn't major in dance because she couldn't access the Israeli education system, even if only for this course. Small examples like these make the inequality visible.

XLR Which you did not encounter before.

AZ No, not at all. As an Israeli, even having Palestinians build your houses, clean your streets, live across from you, you could completely go through life without any real proximity or exchange. I could have an insight to what the other side is going through while this war—these continuous wars—took place. I made a vow then. I promised myself that as long as I was there, this would be the only question I would deal with. I said, "Okay, I'm now getting established, getting funding—what do I want to do with that when I see such events happening?" That was a decision. I was also concerned with how quickly Israeli society returned to normal. This event happened; one month, more than one thousand Palestinians killed, 13 Israelis killed, and then we're all sitting there in Tel Aviv drinking coffee, with not much discussion. So much trauma has been produced, and we just go on as if nothing happened...

XLR Which made your work be political.

AZ Which turned all my efforts to these concerns, yes.

Audience I didn't understand, have you crossed the border to the Palestinian Territory?

AZ I did only once—going on a tour to the Hebron settlement, arranged by an organization called Breaking the Silence. It's a really complex system of territorial division. Each area, each enclave has its own specific regulations regarding who is allowed to pass through. Israel itself is enclosed because of its conflicts with neighboring countries and, within its borders, movement is restricted in different ways. Israelis who are not in military service cannot enter certain areas of the West Bank, and Palestinians face endless checkpoints and ever-changing movement regulations.

To put it simply, there's the so-called Israeli territory, and then there are the occupied territories. But the major debate is: what's actually occupied and when did it become that way? The answer depends entirely on who you ask. Inside Israel, about 20% of the population is Palestinian. Right across from my mother's city, there's a Palestinian village—there's no formal border between us. We shop in the same stores. In some places, there's constant movement back and forth between the two communities. But that doesn't mean it's easy or open because of the system of discrimination in place.

Politically, before the disengagement from Gaza, there was actually more cooperation between Palestinians in the occupied territories and Israelis. But when the first assault on Gaza happened, the BDS movement gained momentum, making a clear political statement: no more cooperation across the Green Line. So, I worked with the communities directly around me. That's where I found peers and collaborators who agreed to meeting and working together.

Audience What changed in your practice and interests when you became a migrant again?

AZ I'm wondering how to approach this question. When I moved to Europe in 2015, I felt that the questions I was busy with in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian context, landed in a different geopolitical context but remained very relevant. The so-called "migration crisis" was at its peak.

I also made a conscious decision not to continue confronting the Israeli context in my subsequent projects. I was wary of being labeled the "oriental artist"—the one who critiques their place of origin while simultaneously benefiting from the Western European context, which in itself is not immune to violence, exclusion, and the systemic erasure of certain histories and populations.

Audience Why did you leave Belarus? Does your Soviet background play a role in your work now? Or, what remained from the "golden era?"

AZ We left Belarus mainly because it became possible. The borders were opened, and my parents decided it was time to go. The local system was falling apart, and my parents had this gut feeling that it was the right moment. A lot of people from the local Jewish community were doing the same—if you could find someone to invite you from Israel, you could leave. At that time, the Soviet system had this undercover segregation of Jewish people. On top of that, we were living only 140 kilometers from Chernobyl, which caused a lot of anxiety for my parents. The danger was real, but invisible. In the Soviet Union, you couldn't just relocate, because you were tied to the place that was assigned to you by the regime (job, apartment). So, there were these summers between 1986 and 1990 when my parents would take us to the Baltic countries whenever possible, trying to keep us away from the radiation. It was all a constant negotiation with that new threat. There wasn't any ideological connection to Israel—no strong affiliation like some others had. For us, it was purely practical.

As for what remains from the "golden era," it's hard to say. My mother always said that the performance starts when you give your coat at the lodge. I think I still have this sense when putting up each new performance, in a new space, taking care of the smallest details. One could call it an obsession.

XLR Do you work with or for institutions? Which one(s) and how do you relate to that?

AZ Right now I'm in a university, which is an institution. It was a deliberate move because I had exhausted the other ways; I was just tired of the whole production mechanism.

XLR Touring.

AZ Although I am still doing that, I am increasingly invited to university contexts. So, I thought, "Why not make this connection official?" I mean, we have to define "institution" because, for example, in *Archive*, I cooperated with B'Tselem, the human rights organization that set up this project where they give cameras to Palestinians to document their life under the Israeli occupation. This is an institution in some way. They opened the doors to me and gave me access to all their material. There was an ongoing conversation and exchange. This felt very much like working "with."

XLR They didn't necessarily know what you would do.

AZ Well, no. But they knew my work beforehand. A person from their team I approached had a connection to the dance community, which made it easier for me to get access. But when I started this project, I had already been working in line with that vow I mentioned, so it wasn't out of the blue when I approached them. They knew what I was about and that made them open for this cooperation.

There is also constant work with art institutions to make them believe in what you're doing. In my case, it's tricky because of this proximity to real, current, and often polarizing issues. When working with these institutions, I try to resist the service-product dynamic. We often aim to create a larger context program around the work itself. We aim for the work to become a starting point for a larger conversation. We often seek local associations or researchers to join in and continue the discussion, and make it relevant to the local context.

XLR How is it with the university?

AZ In a PhD trajectory, you are always somewhat on your own. I first joined the University of Antwerp and the Royal Conservatoire in Antwerp, but later I expanded this to include Ghent University and KASK School of Arts through a joint PhD mandate. So, once again, I find myself not really fitting into one context, and I'm trying to make it my own. On a bureaucratic level, it definitely makes things more complex. But from another perspective, I can benefit from this more versatile context I've created for myself.

I sense that I'm never taking it for granted and never satisfied within the institution as an institution. I try to understand how I can navigate within its limitations, but also within the openness that can be produced.

XLR How do you produce your work (or the work of others)? How do you find the means to develop your work and research? You have already answered this. What is your relationship to applications?

AZ A love-hate relationship. I want to be able not to do them anymore. Every time I'm faced with another application I'm like, "Are we doing this again?" Of course, sometimes, not very often, we get structural funding, and of course, when a new project comes up, it's necessary to outline a direction and concept. But often we are in survival mode. When the association doesn't have enough money, we start hunting for grants. If we have to do that, it's a sign that we don't have enough work to sustain the association. There were times when the work was touring more and money came in, but it's an ongoing practice and I'm really tired of it. It doesn't come easy for me. I'm a slow writer and I write through interaction and exchange. I need a lot of feedback. Plus I'm not really grounded in any of the four languages I speak because of the transitions between them. Now I'm learning French, and I find myself using French structures within English sentences. It's a constant challenge. So, writing is not easy.

XLR But you have to.

AZ Yes. Now ChatGPT helps me reduce the anxiety of not formulating the sentence well. So, I collaborate with it—it works. I see what I need to change, refine, or adapt.

XLR Does the dialog with the dramaturg begin before there's an application?

AZ It varies from project to project. Sometimes there is a clear starting point, while other times, Igor and I simply begin with a conversation. The processes are very long, so we continuously rewrite texts as the project gradually becomes more clearly defined.

XLR So, it is not necessarily that there is a project and therefore there is an application.

AZ There are many ways to make it happen. For example, in the current project *The Cloud*, an important idea that really pushed the process forward came from a call for projects by a theater. It was an open call for a maker (in theater or dance) to collaborate with someone from a completely different

field. We invited an expert working with artificial intelligence, and the entire project was reshaped by this encounter; we reconfigured the whole concept.

XLR How do you deal with or avoid stress from production deadlines?

AZ Since the processes are very long, the deadlines are usually far away—but they do eventually approach. For *Talos*, for example, we had to rethink everything midway through the project. We had to secure new funding because we were shifting direction, and we had already invested in specific equipment. In that case we postponed the deadline. But because these projects unfold over a long period, there is time for ideas to develop and be reconsidered. Of course, there is the excitement and the tension of a new encounter with the audience, but it's not the pressure of an approaching deadline. Because of the political nature of the topics, there is another kind of tension in this encounter… It's about what the work communicates through the material on a political level.

XLR How do you relate to the notion of "project" in your work and in your life? Has this changed over time?

AZ It's all one project, actually. The university trajectory allows me to clarify that.

From the early workshops in Palestinian and Druze villages to today, it's a continuous project—one ongoing exploration of how we engage with different social and political contexts, and how we convey these questions through artistic work.

Over time, this thread became more evident. There is now an extensive archive of writings on my website—both texts by others about my work, and also my writings. This ongoing process led to the concept of *documentary choreography* which emerged through my PhD as a way to articulate the overarching thread of my work over the last decade. Also, the projects are not becoming dated, they maintain their urgency over time because they are rooted in events which keep unfolding.

XLR Are all your works still available?

AZ Not all of them can be staged. I haven't performed *Archive* for a few years, and now, with everything that is happening in Gaza, people are starting to remember that work. There is this coming back.

Audience Could you expand on your collaboration with NGOs? Did you contact them, or did they contact you?

AZ In the case of *Archive* and B'Tselem, they were familiar with my work and granted me full access to their archive, which is actually open to anyone who communicates a valid reason for access. They released part of it online. And that's how the work began—I came across one of their videos and it compelled me to reach out.

Necropolis also started from an NGO work—an organization called UNITED for Intercultural Action which is a network of activist groups and individuals that, as part of one of their campaign projects *The List of Refugee Deaths*, compiles information about people who lose their life on migratory routes towards Europe. Their list is public, and after discovering it I went to visit their offices in Amsterdam. Initially, it was just, "Hello. I'm interested in your work, your activism, and how you archive." But as we conducted research—seeking out graves and mapping sites of death—we started noticing missing information in the list, when we found the graves. At times, a name would appear once at the graveyard. When we found these discrepancies, we reported back and over time, it became a

continuous exchange of information. Now, there are a few hundred entries in the list that came from our research.

This collaboration has extended further, now we are working together on a research project at Ghent University. We even managed to redirect a significant portion of the research funding to them, effectively hijacking the funding system in Flanders to support their work.

XLR How do you get feedback on your work?

AZ I work with a dramaturg; so there's immediate feedback throughout the creation process. I'm fortunate to work with Igor in the last year, and over time this relation goes beyond "just work." We also open up the process to feedback from friends, or from the public during residencies. It's a practice—learning to use these moments in a constructive way. I've had to go through my own process of understanding how I take in feedback, how I respond to it, and what I take with me.

Then, of course, there's the audience. We always push for after-talks because we're trying to create context, to keep the conversation going. We even ask institutions to commit to this. When it doesn't happen, something feels incomplete—people come up to us afterward, asking questions, wanting to know more. So, for me, there are three levels of feedback: from inside the process, from the audience, and then—another story altogether—from programmers, which is another type of challenge.

XLR Do you use trigger warnings in your works?

AZ The trigger warnings are everywhere when working with these topics—it's less about using them and more about navigating through them.

XLR But do you announce beforehand, for example, that there will be violence in the show?

AZ The trigger warnings are part of the conceptualization of the work. In *Archive*, for example, I understood that only I could perform these gestures of settler violence—as a choreographer with a personal history tied with this context, with this vow I made. I acknowledged how violent these gestures are, and that there are ethical consequences when performing them, especially if this is delegated to someone else but me. That's why, in the workshops following this project, I made it very clear that I would not "teach" this specific material to others. Instead the practice became about how each participant could address their own context.

It's about the politics of the material. When you work with these subjects, you're walking through a minefield—you have to be precise and careful about what you put out there. You're dealing with real people's lives, with atrocities that have been inflicted on them. Throughout these projects, I also examine my own privilege. In *Archive*, I embody the gestures of settlers as a way to interrogate my own identity and community. In *Talos*, I take on the role of promoting surveillance technology meant to police borders. I see myself as implicated in these structures, just as I want to challenge the audience's role as onlookers to these realities. This has become a method—navigating these ethical and moral complexities while making sure the work doesn't simply reproduce violence, but instead forces a critical confrontation with it.

XLR So, you need to extend the understanding of trigger warnings. Saying "there is violence in the show" obviously doesn't work.

AZ It's about the reiteration of violence, from a critical perspective. In *Archive*, that's exactly what I'm doing—I'm repeating these gestures, but in a deliberate, conscious process. I feel it's necessary to

re-perform them in order to critique them. There's always this layer—especially in the last three projects—of ambiguity, and from which position we are speaking in order to criticize the system, because I'm deeply aware of the privileges embedded in the system we operate within, the artistic one. And I want to question the position of my spectators.

XLR What is your relationship to freedom of speech and/or censorship? Do you have any experience or example to share?

AZ Well, I have quite a history with freedom of speech. One of the impulses to move away from Israel-Palestine was the censorship I faced—both from the government and from individuals. There were two demonstrations against me because, in Israel some would say, I was "airing dirty laundry" in public. I have to contextualize this. The day *Archive* premiered in Avignon, another assault on Gaza began—the fourth in the series—in which, once again, the death tolls showed a disproportion of thousands to tens—the new CEO of B'Tselem went on international news and made two statements: first, that Israel was committing war crimes in Gaza and second, that B'Tselem would stop cooperating with the Israeli army. Until then, they had been providing the military with information about crimes committed by settlers and soldiers but they realized it wasn't being taken seriously. This created a backlash against B'Tselem from politicians and right-wing groups. And since I was presenting *Archive* at that time, the accusations extended to me.

A video installation connected to the project was exhibited in a museum, and there was an attempt to shut it down, but the exhibition was already near its closing phase, so they kept the work. Those protesting claimed they had succeeded in shutting it down, but in reality, it was just the scheduled closure. When I began performing the stage work, the efforts to stop it continued, escalating to a political level. Politicians started mentioning my name and my work. There were also attempts to cut my funding—some of which were successful.

Then, there were the demonstrations. A small one took place in Tel Aviv in front of the Ministry of Culture, and a larger, more violent one outside of an art venue where I was invited to speak about the project. I was escorted in and out by the police, and there was also violence against the audience attending the event. The Minister of Culture demanded to see the work on video. A lawyer from a civil rights organization assisted me in navigating this situation.

This experience with censorship even extended to Europe. In Paris, for example, there was heightened security in the theater due to threats from right-wing activists. And just before *Talos* was released—funnily enough—their website disappeared. Maybe it was a coincidence. Maybe not.

XLR How is the notion of embodiment involved in your practice(s)?

AZ Well, I would say, "how can it not be?" In *Talos* and *Necropolis*, this was a question posed by the institutions—where is the dance? For me, the connection with movement is rather evident. In these projects, we examine contexts where the movement is restricted through technological advancement or increasing fortification of a territory. We wondered what would be the most effective way for it to be translated into a choreographic work. Consequently, the absence of "dance" from these works is a choreographic choice.

In *Talos*, the challenge was to imagine a choreography of encounters between human and non-human agents in border territories. How can we use choreographic tools to understand this situation? In *Necropolis*, we perform continuous walks. We have walked towards and stood in front of more than 1,000 graves across Europe—an immense, ongoing choreography. In the performance, these walks are

made accessible to the public via footage we produced using our cell phones and the movement of Google Earth, which we scroll through, navigate through to access the different graves we localized. It is a choreographic journey that the audience is invited to.

So, I engage with an expanded notion of choreography, applying it to contexts that may not seem choreographic at first glance. But I insist that they are—the procedures we propose are clearly choreographic when viewed from a more expanded perspective.

XLR And therefore embodiment. You said, how could there not be embodiment? The question is rather how each work…

AZ This is most of the process—to understand how.

XLR ...how what you bring on stage is and can be re-embodied in order to become a work of art—it cannot stay in the way it is already embodied in the document.

AZ Or understanding that these documents are disembodied. The list of UNITED, although constructed with an activist agenda, also places information about the dead individuals it documents in the lines on a PDF. Hence the desire to bring back the discussion to the sphere of the body.