Negotiating Colonial Violence: Spaces of Precarisation in Palestine

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Abstract: This paper examines the ways in which colonial violence is transformed and spatialised into negotiated precarities at the occupied Palestine. The notion of "negotiated precarity" is developed herein, to refer to two aspects in particular. First, to spatial compartmentalisation, which shows how the settler colonial power operates by creating precarious administrative zones, where the life of the colonised becomes prone to several flexible, negotiated uses of power. Second, negotiated precarity is used to refer to the conduct of the colonised that counters, transforms, redirects, cancels or hampers the colonial spatialisations of power. By focusing on the "negotiated precarities" in a singular West Bank village, I exemplify how the colonial governing is entwined with spatial compartments that enable several informal, indirect and ad hoc techniques of colonial violence, but also how the colonial governing is constantly mobilised, negotiated, countered and redirected in/through the everyday Palestinian spaces.

Keywords: Palestine, West Bank, compartmentalisation, zoning, precarity, settler colonialism, government, political action

It is conflict about the history, and the geography of the land ... when they change the geography, they change the history. (Interviewee, Al-Walaja, West Bank)

Introduction

As Frantz Fanon (1963:29) wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "the colonial world is a world divided into compartments". During the last 50 years of Israeli occupation, administrative zonings, enclavisations, borderings, quarters, compartments, lines, pockets, segregations and other divides have played a crucial role in producing the complex and historically layered spaces of governing the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Falah 2003; Zureik 2016).[1] Although these spatial divisions have often, and justly, been discussed in terms of racial separation, apartheid or broader organisation and exploitation of life in the colonies (e.g. Kipfer 2006; Legg 2007; Pappe 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014; Veracini 2010; Yiftachel 2009), in this paper I approach these compartmentalisations, not only as a technique for spatialising settler colonial violence, but also as they are negotiated as part of the everyday Palestinian spaces. Compartmentalisation, I show, operates by creating precarious

administrative zones, where the life of the colonised is prone to a variety of spatially negotiated colonial precarities. I examine these zonings and precarities by focusing on the variety of modes though which they are mobilised, negotiated, redirected and implemented as part of the everyday Palestinian life. I will do so by focusing on the West Bank village of Al-Walaja, which I show to provide an exemplary site for examining not only the variety of techniques Israel uses to spatialise its settler colonial project, but the ways in which these precarities become implemented, negotiated and redirected in practice. A more profound picture of the occupation is thus revealed, one that shows how colonial violence induces vulnerabilities (*precarisation*) upon the occupied population and the spaces they dwell in, but also how the establishment of precarious zones (*compartmentalisation*) enables several formal and informal, direct and indirect practices that link administrative violence back to the military violence of killing, harming, destructing, disabling and maiming. My main claim is that a focus on what I refer to as the "negotiated precarities" affords a stance that properly acknowledges not only how the use of power and distribution of precarities are negotiated in the spatialisation of colonial power, but also the ways in which the practices of governing appear and become redirected, ignored, erased, transformed, etc. as part of the everyday spaces of the colonised.

I start the paper by discussing the main processes at play in "negotiated precarities": the flexible precarisation part of *compartmentalising* colonial power and the *negotiation* of precarities in everyday Palestinian spaces. I focus in particular on how precarity operates as a political and ontological condition of governing *and* counter-conduct, and how these different sides of precarity are played out in spatial terms. In the second section I look at the historical ways in which colonial precarities have been spatialised in the village of Al-Walaja. In the third section I show how this compartmentalisation has enabled the state of Israel to flexibly control, strangulate and disable the sites of everyday Palestinian life. In order to further scrutinise how such flexible governing functions, I show how a cavalcade of formal and informal governing practices bring the colonial violence to the fore through a precarisation that is negotiated and manifested as part of the everyday life of Palestinian bodies and their sites of dwelling.

Studying Colonial Violence in Spaces of Everyday

Spatialising colonial violence through administrative, legal and governmental processes is, of course, not a new phenomenon. As Achille Mbembe (2003:26) recalls, colonial powers have for a long time (re)shaped power relations in colonies by establishing administrative zones, enclaves and borders, often accompanied by new social hierarchies and land ownership arrangements (see Legg 2007; Shafir 1989). The ongoing legalisation of land appropriations (Joronen 2017b), the use of permit regimes (Berda 2017), and the demolition of homes often related to colonial planning and rezoning (Chiodelli 2012, 2017) are all, as I will show below in detail, clearly indicative of how Israel uses administrative processes for spatialising settler colonial violence, particularly in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. While there is a broader agreement within the existing literature on the

prevalence of Israel's use of settler colonial means of governing (Pullan and Yacobi 2017; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014, 2015; Veracini 2006, 2010; Zureik 2016), critics have claimed all too often Palestinian spaces have been framed through, and so sidelined with those of the Israeli occupation (Allen 2008; Harker 2009; Joronen 2017a; Kotef and Amir 2011; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2008). As it has also been argued within the literature critical of governing- and governmentality-centred approaches (Death 2010; MacKinnon 2000), focus on the control, government, and conducting of others tends to ignore the "real-world messiness", therefore setting aside "the practice, implementation, agency, experience and resistance" of the ones governed (Rosol 2014:75). Mbembe (2003:28–29), for instance, acknowledges Palestine as one of the "most accomplished sites" of "late colonial power", claiming it offers a principal set, where the multiple forms of power— from the disciplinary to bio- and necro-political (see Joronen 2016a; Zureik 2016) —are used to extend Israel's "*absolute domination* over the inhabitants of the occupied territories" (emphasis added). And yet, the focus on domination and control, and the colonial spaces they induce (Gordon 2008; Weizman 2007), can never capture the everyday spaces of *Palestinian* life, always irreducible to the aims and functions of the (settler) colonial state (e.g. Amir and Kotef 2015; Griffiths 2017; Harker 2009; Joronen 2017a).

In this article I suggest one way for properly acknowledging the above-mentioned approaches—the ones focusing on the colonial spaces induced through the Israeli governing practices (e.g. Gordon 2008; Weizman 2007), and the others focusing on Palestinian spaces of everyday (e.g. Harker 2009; Joronen 2017a)—is through the notion of precarity. Focus on precarity, particularly on its "spatialisation", I argue, helps in showing how Israeli settler colonialism operates through the spatial zones and compartments that use precarisation as a tool for governing, while also revealing how governing becomes implemented through the spaces of everyday encounter, or what I refer to as the "negotiated precarities" redirecting, ignoring, erasing and transforming the colonial conduct.

My argument here is twofold. First, although the precarisation of the colonised can be used as a settler colonial tactic of governing, precariousness is also something, as Judith Butler (2010:25–26) writes, that characterises "life itself", and thus, I argue, all efforts to govern. The notion of precariousness hence significantly broadens the scope of precarity from current approaches that either consider it as an "affectual" condition (Anderson 2014:126–127) or as a "political" form of governing (Lorey 2015) to cover the ontological fragility intrinsic for all living and acting, including the practices of governing. This signifies not only the fact that governing remains always vulnerable to resistance, but also the uncertainty, unpredictability and incompleteness of governing, which we can see in negotiations taking place in spatialising the use of colonial power. Second, even though precarisation has the power to turn the spaces and lives of the colonised even close to unliveable, it can also operate as a source of action. Induced precarities do not merely passivise those set under the precarious conditions, but engender new forms of action and social practice, ranging from the solidarity within the communities under the threat of settler colonial eviction to the counter-conducts and counter-visibilities against the settler colonial ways of precarisation and

elimination (see Athanasiou 2016; Hammami 2016; Joronen 2017a; Joronen and Griffiths 2018a). Together, these two tensions—the one between the political distribution of precarities and ontological precariousness, and the other between precarity as a source of governing and counter-conduct—also help in understanding how the corresponding spatialities between the compartmentalisation (as a tactic of spatialising colonial violence) and the negotiated precarities operate in a way that takes into account the irreducibility of Palestinian spaces to the precarities imposed by Israeli settler colonialism.

Judith Butler's discussion of precarity as differentiated between the ontological and the political condition—between life's intrinsic frailty, finitude, and proneness to harm (its *precariousness*) and the political frames and social conditions through which *precarities* become distributed—has been of influence for recent geographical work on Palestine and beyond (e.g. Griffiths and Joronen 2018; Harker 2012; Joronen 2016b; Kearns 2013). These debates examine and draw attention to the manifold *political* ways through which precarity has been used as a tool for governing, from neoliberal to settler colonial (Waite 2009), leaving the role of the *ontological* precariousness in governing relatively untouched. Apart from Mitch Rose's (2014:215) elaboration of the way in which ontological vulnerability has been mobilised as a form of "negative governance", where the precariousness of life itself is "let to rule" through the "strategic decision not to govern" (see also Joronen 2017b; Ramadan and Fregonese 2017), the ways in which ontological precariousness constitutes and relates to a practice of governing have not been taken into explicit consideration.

To properly consider the role of precariousness in governing, I argue, first, that while we need to acknowledge that the governed may be placed in vulnerable living conditions, governmental processes themselves also bear ontological vulnerabilities that make governing a conduct always prone to failure, reconfiguration, transformation, resistance and other unpredictable outcomes. I hence understand governing practice as an *aim* to govern—as a *governmentalising drive* in which vulnerability, complicity, incompleteness, and metamorphosis may become visible through analysis of its implementation and negotiation in everyday spaces. Nonetheless, even though precariousness may constitute an ontological condition of living, it always remains irreducible to any of the particular political, social and spatial ontologies—it constitutes, as Butler (2015:129) aptly writes, our "joint non-foundation". Precariousness is thus what haunts all political, social and spatial manifestations as a reminder of their intrinsic finitude, thereby offering, not an ontological foundation of life, but a condition that makes life (and its governing) fragile, vulnerable and finite. It is such a "hauntology" of precariousness that thus makes colonial governing vulnerable, incomplete and prone to resistance and negotiations.

Second, the irreducibility of precariousness to any political means also allows it to operate as a source for both, governing (precarisation) and the counter-conduct (mobilisation of the precarised). This, I argue, highlights the importance of comprehending precarity as beyond the passivising/activating and the governing/governed divides (see also Athanasiou 2016; Butler 2016). As shown by several scholars, even remarkable vulnerabilities can create new forms of solidarity

(Hammami 2016), steadfastness (Lentin 2016), resistance (Joronen 2017a), resilient family practices (Harker 2012), affectual capacities (Joronen and Griffiths 2019a) and hope (Griffiths 2017; Joronen and Griffiths 2019b) among the colonised, particularly when shared. Vulnerability can be hence used to perpetuate subjugating governing but also activating resistance; it ensures the governed and the governing alike remain vulnerable, but can also be used as a resource for affirming new action, counter-conduct and new ways of coping with settler colonial violence. Focus on the means of governing, no matter how persuasive they are, is not enough; attention must be paid to the processes of distribution in the actual "messiness" of governing practice and how precarities are negotiated, resisted and transformed in and through everyday encounters. Accordingly, one should recognise the incompleteness and incapacity of governing, but also the hope, counter-acting, pertinacity, obduracy, disobedience, solidarity, resistance and the other manifold, often small-scale ways of erasing, diminishing, redirecting, cancelling, ignoring and inoperationalising the precarities induced by settler colonial governing.

The focus on the negotiation, distribution and alleviation of precarities means, above all, attending to how precarities become spatialised and distributed in space. As Christopher Harker (2012) has shown, examining precarity through different spatio-temporal contexts helps in revealing more nuanced and spatially differentiated politics, which unsettles the spatially robust divides often associated with discussions of war, colonialism and nationalism. For Harker, this specific focus has enabled compelling accounts of how Palestinian family practices help in alleviating exposure to colonial precarities in spatially differentiated and localised ways. In the analysis that follows, I draw on and further Harker's insight to show how the spatial differentiation of precarities emerge through the two connected processes: the "compartmentalisation" of precarities into administrative zones; and the negotiation of precarities as part of the spaces of implementation, of which I mean not only those negotiations Palestinians do in their daily lives but the ones related to the space-sensitive use of power. To this end, I suggest starting from the everyday struggles and violence faced by the colonised can provide an ethically motivated methodological stance that makes the everyday realities of the colonised its prime concern. As claimed by several authors, it is an ethical standpoint to look at Palestinian lives beyond the "victimhood", which at worst reduces them into mere targets of governing without a voice of their own (e.g. Kotef and Amir 2011; Marshall 2014). The erasure of Palestinian agency, voice and capacity to resist is particularly problematic as Palestinians themselves refuse to succumb, both in practice (Joronen 2017a) and at the level of identification (Lentin 2016), into mere targets of colonial power. And yet, as I will further show in the final section, focus on negotiated precarities also shows the controversial and countering nature of governing, as practices of resistance and counter-conduct can also be re-mobilised to serve the purpose of governing. Not only are governmental efforts thus prone to resisting and counter-conduct, but the resistance and counter-conduct themselves can also be tactically promoted to strengthen and normalise colonial conduct. This dynamic, I argue, further underlines the need to focus on the spatialisation of precarity, particularly on how

the practice of governing appears and becomes negotiated as part of the every-day life of colonised people.

As the discussion above shows, amplifying the voice *of* (rather than giving a voice to) colonised people is an ethical and methodological task that engages with the "actual messiness" and the (often informal) complexity of governing and colonial violence. The accounts I use here to explore the negotiated precarities are drawn from the two fieldwork periods conducted in the West Bank village of Al-Walaja and its surroundings in 2016 and 2017, during which I interviewed residents including farmers, officials, council members, activists, NGO workers, pensioners and families dealing with and/or threatened by different forms of colonial violence. Some of the talks were conducted in a more formal interview set-up (16 interviews), others more informally by participating in the olive harvest, council meetings and other social get-togethers, or as walking interviews around the village and its surroundings. The interview materials were supported by daily observations, notes and ethnographic vignettes put together into fieldwork diaries, but also by other official and unofficial materials collected from different archival sources (i.e. home demolition orders, statistics, Al-Walaja Facebook pages). Through these materials, I show, we can paint a subtler picture on the spatialisation of precarities—on how the establishment of precarious zones makes colonial tactics part of everyday Palestinian life (*compartmentalisation*), and how informal practices and everyday spaces of encounter are crucial for the precarisation and their implementation as *negotiated precarities*.

Compartmentalisation of Al-Walaja: Short History of Governmental Zonings

As Ghazi-Walid Falah (2003) has shown, targeting of the Arab-Palestinian population in the occupied territories and Israel proper through "zoning", "enclavization/exclavization" and "spatial segregation" policies has a long history that can be dated to before the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian Territories (on the role of the British Mandate regulations, see Abdo 2011; Gordon 2008). While Falah's focus on zoning reveals the colonial processes that effect the overall "shrinking" of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the creation of zones, I argue, also allows Israel to flexibly implement colonial processes through several informal and indirect site-specific practices. This is particularly the case in Al-Walaja (and its surroundings, Al-Makhrour, Battir, Cremisan Valley), one of the "border" sites next to the 1949 armistice line (the "green line") in the eastern part of the Bethlehem district. Al-Walaja's vicinity to Jerusalem has made it subject to several colonial spatialisations, including the Jerusalem Masterplan, construction of the Separation Wall, settlement expansion, national park establishment, and the cavalcade of Israeli "Area C" policies. It is precisely these processes, originating in different historical moments, that have created a presence of several administrative compartments which the state of Israel uses to flexibly implement settler colonial appropriations, eliminations and evictions.

After the 1948 war, approximately 66% of Al-Walaja's original land area, including the build-up part of the village, was handed to the newly established state of

Israel in the armistice agreement signed with Jordan in April 1949 (Khalidi 1997:322–323). Many Al-Walajees fled the 1948 battles to the caves in the eastern agricultural part of village—one of the older interviewees even bravely stating he was "born in a cave"—to wait for a chance to return to their homes. After Israel destroyed most of the original village in 1954 to prevent Al-Walajees, contra UN resolution 194 (the "right to return'), from returning to their homes behind the Green Line, villagers slowly started to realise their stalled situation. As one of the villagers, born in the aftermath of the *Nakba* (the 1948 "catastrophe"), aptly put it: "I was born as a refugee in my own village". The temporary shanties, shacks, cottages, and premises built in caves were gradually replaced with more permanent houses, the eastern part of the village eventually forming what today is known as the West Bank village of Al-Walaja (see Figure 1).

After Israel occupied the West Bank and other Palestinian territories after the Six-Day War in 1967, Al-Walaja faced another kind of divide: the one of administrative zoning. More than a half of the remaining eastern part of the village (13% of the original land area) was unilaterally annexed within the borders of Jerusalem, which Israel today considers, again unilaterally and against the international law or the view of an international community (excluding the Trump administration), as its "united capital" (B'tselem 2014; UNRWA 2011). After the occupation, two
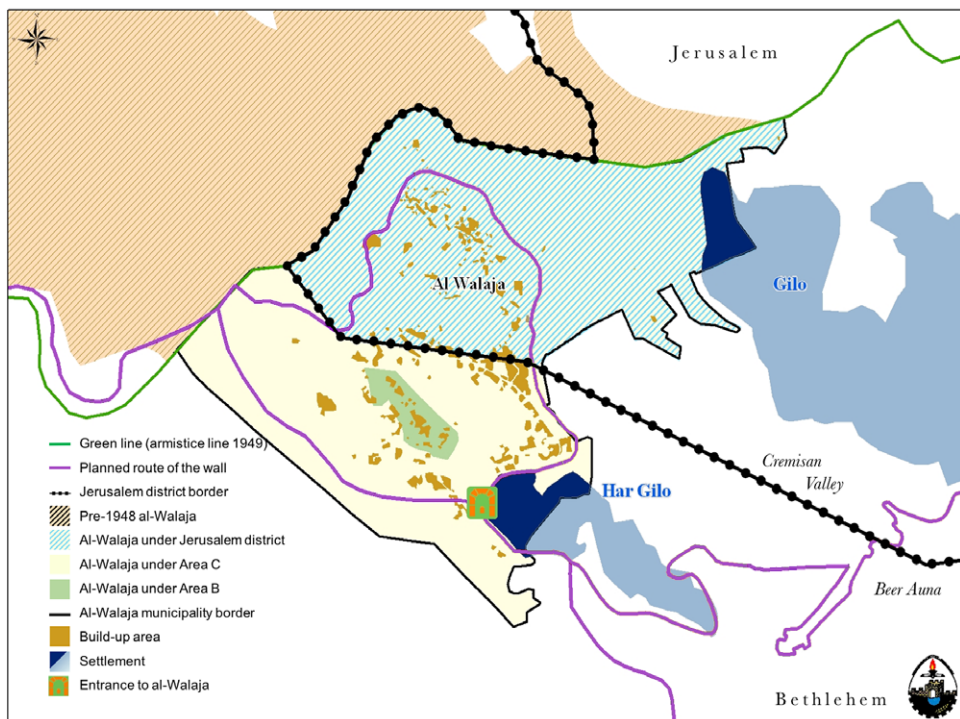

Figure 1:   Compartmentalisation of Al-Walaja
(map by Issa Zboun, Head of Geo-Informatics [GIS & Remote Sensing] Department, Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem [ARIJ], Bethlehem, Palestine; modified by author; reproduced here with permission) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com].

additional parcels of land were confiscated from the eastern part of the village for the construction of Israeli-Jewish settlements—Gilo (1971) and Har Gilo (1972)—both of which have had a steady population growth since their establishment (ARIJ 2010:17; ECF 2016; JPS 2016). The rest of the village was occupied and held under military rule (see Figure 1).

The re-zoning of the Jerusalem district, which also impinged on several other West Bank communities around East Jerusalem (see Chiodelli 2017; Jabareen 2010; Yiftachel 2009), had a significant impact on Al-Walaja, particularly after Israel formalised Jerusalem as its united capital in 1980. Although much has been written about the colonial aims and "creeping urban apartheid" of the Israeli planning system (Yiftachel 2009), and the complex entanglement of racist goals to rational-comprehensive and neoliberal planning in East Jerusalem (Abdo 2011; Braier 2013; Wari 2011), Al-Walaja offers one of the sites for looking at the devastating consequences these plans, particularly the "Jerusalem 2000 plan",[2] have had for the surrounding West Bank communities. Despite being forcefully annexed to Jerusalem, residents of the Jerusalem part of Al-Walaja (the *Ain Jawaizeh* neighbourhood) have not been offered Israeli citizenship or Jerusalem IDs (a residency permit with limited rights issued to Palestinians in East Jerusalem; see Tawil-Souri 2012). Although several legal efforts to recognise and improve the status of Al-Walajees residing in *Ain Jawaizeh* have been made in Israeli courts, most of the residents are still considered to dwell in their homes illegally, and have thus been targeted with home demolition orders, harassments and administrative fines. As the head of the village council estimated in 2017, since the mid 1980s Israel has issued altogether 150 home demolition orders in Al-Walaja, while close to 60 demolitions have already been implemented, some of the premises being destroyed only recently (see also Al-Walaja Withstand 2018; BADIL 2013; UNRWA 2013).

Home demolitions, however, are not only restricted to land annexed to the Jerusalem district. After the Oslo Peace Accords (1993/1995), which were to offer a roadmap to peace through the partial sovereignty of the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA), the remaining part of Al-Walaja was zoned into areas "C" and "B". While "Area B" has a civilian administration run by the PA, it only comprises less than 3% of the original land area of the village (ARIJ 2010:16). The rest of the post-67 village is considered as "Area C" under the direct security and administrative control of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) (see Figure 1). Since the mid 1990s, however, Israel has used its control of Area C to further catalyse settlement expansion, by simultaneously hampering Palestinian development with restrictions and a purposely slow and obstructive permit regime (Berda 2017; Joronen 2017b). Less than 1% of the whole of "Area C" is allocated for Palestinian development (OCHA 2014), while the situation is even more alarming in those parts of "Area C", such as Al-Walaja (of which the villagers used an expression "Area C minus") that stand in the way of the Israeli expansion plans. In the future transportation plan for metropolitan Jerusalem, for instance (a collaborative effort between Transportation Ministry, Finance Ministry, and Jerusalem Municipality), the connection between West Bank settlements and Jerusalem is considered as a natural part of metropolitan growth (JTM 2014).

The most recent, still partly ongoing compartmentalisation is related to the construction of the Separation Wall, the 8-metre concrete wall/fence which separates the built-up areas of Al-Walaja from the surrounding agricultural lands in both the Area C and "Jerusalem" parts (*Ain Jamaizeh*) (see Figure 1). As the construction of the wall in Al-Walaja highlights, most of its planned route does not run along the Green Line but within the West Bank, the wall thus connecting settlements more tightly to Israel, while simultaneously sequestering land and destroying the livelihoods of Palestinian villages, neighbourhoods and communities (UNRWA 2013). In Al-Walaja (and its surroundings) the wall has already separated Palestinian farmers from their lands and obstructed olive harvesting and grazing in the "seam zone" between the Wall and the Green line; it has also imposed a significant threat of demolition upon homes located behind or in the planned route of the wall. One of the farmer families, for instance, explained how they now need to "buy feed for their goats" who, before the Wall, would graze in the areas now separated away. When complete, the wall will entirely surround Al-Walaja and strangulate it to a "Bantustan" with one entrance point only.

As the discussion above shows, Al-Walaja has not only been cut into several governmental zones and compartments—Areas C and B, Jerusalem municipality, settlements, seam zones—but strangulated and shrunk into an isolated pocket targeted by different regulations, permits and administrative conducts related to home demolitions, land appropriations, restrictions and other ways of hampering everyday life and the practice of professions. Together the historically folded agreements, confiscations, zonings, strangulations and unilateral annexations have thus created a local mosaic of governmental compartments, which offers a spatial platform for flexibly spatialising colonial violence through the variety of administrative techniques, practices, plans and regulations, whose specificities I turn to in the following section.

Negotiating Precarity

As the head of the Al-Walaja village council summarised, compartmentalisation of the village has affected everyday life in profound ways. "Many people here were farmers", he explained; "now, after the land was taken from them, people are going to other jobs". As another interviewee continued, confiscation of areas with water springs in particular has significantly affected the livelihood of the village:

> Al-Walaja was one of the main villages in the area that provided fruits and vegetables for Jerusalem, and the whole region. Now, since we don't have the water, we cannot farm anymore, the land is becoming drier and the farmers turning into workers.

One of the few remaining water springs, *Al-Haniye*, that emerges from the caves in the western part of the village, is located in a section of a "seam zone", which Israel designated a public park area in 2013 (B'tselem 2014). As the newly established information boards around the spring show, Israel is currently turning the area into a public park with cycling paths, hiking trails, picnic areas, play grounds, planted forest areas, artificial lakes, archaeological sites, and so forth. The *Al-Haniye* spring, which used to be a popular picnic site for the Al-Walajees,

has thus become almost unrecognisable for villagers during the last year, particularly due to the archaeological reconstructions around the spring. Archaeology, as acknowledged by a number of scholars, has been one of the ways through which Israel appropriates and builds ethnic belongingness to the occupied lands, sometimes with dubious interpretations, or by simply excluding non-Jewish archaeological layers (Gori 2013; Makdisi 2010). Despite the fact that the park area was re-zoned as a "public space" within the West Bank territory, Palestinian access to *Al-Haniye* is restricted by a fence and a checkpoint that was recently moved between the village and the spring (Hasson 2017). "They either take the land for the public use, settler roads usually, build parks, or confiscate land for military areas", one of the interviewees described the common ways of confiscating land (see also OCHA 2009; POICA 2016). As another interviewee from Al-Walaja aptly stated, "they want to have a picnic in our land, while we are prisoners surrounded by walls".

Re-zoning West Bank areas between the Green Line and the Wall, however, is not only about confiscating Palestinian land and water resources; it also affects everyday life in manifold, less direct ways, as was evident during the olive harvest in Autumn 2017. In October of that year, when I arrived at the fields in the valley below Al-Walaja, families were gathering to share a meal and I was invited to join the picnic served with fresh olive oil, zaatar and *shraak*-bread freshly made in the campfire. Kids were playing, and climbing the trees, endlessly poking us to take (and show) photos of them playing, smiling and fooling around. Afterwards, we went downwards to check one of the few springs still accessible to villagers. Music reached us from somewhere far away, suddenly becoming louder, again quieting down, as though it was coming from a car passing by with windows down and music playing far too loud. We walked downwards, the music continued vibrating and echoing around the valley. There was something strange in the music—in its ridiculously pumping techno-beat and overtly aggressive vocals— that at intervals caught our attention, only to soon disappear to the background. We arrived at the spring and sat down on the edge of the concrete pool, kids threw rocks in the water, when suddenly the music became very loud, accompanied by an aggressive choir of screams. I realised the voices were multiple and came downwards, from the *Al-Haniye* area. "It is settler music", someone blurted to me; "settlers are down there". For a scene, that was clearly meant to be a disturbance, a deterrent, or at least a reminder of the presence of the threat of settler violence, the impact on villagers and olive pickers seemed almost null. Kids were not asked to run to their parents, warnings were not given, there were no signs of fear in the air. "We need to be strong", one interviewee said later on, "to not let these things to get under our skin". Yet, the presence of settlers, and the colonial appropriation, gave an atmospheric reminder, marking the site villagers had enjoyed just recently with aggression and noise, thus reiterating the villagers' sense the park area is not theirs anymore.

A similar story came out in an interview I conducted in 2017 with an old man named Ahmed.[3] Ahmed, born and raised in Al-Walaja, told his life-story focused on his struggle against Israeli land appropriations—of disobedience, of IDF soldiers dragging him off his land now located behind the Wall, of his arrest and

(unsuccessful) efforts to force false confessions out of him. During the interview, those surrounding Ahmed—my research assistant, a local guide and Ahmed's grandson and me—listened to Ahmed's story silently, occasionally laughing at his (mis)adventures and stubborn resoluteness:

> 800 metres of the Wall is on my own land. They needed to cut the trees to make the Wall and ... gave me an option to replace the uprooted trees to my land, but I said "don't touch anything". Because then they would say they didn't uproot the trees, but just moved them! They said they will take the trees away then, but I told them, "if you take the trees, I will break your hands".

The old man, born in pre-48 Al-Walaja, was as resolute as someone who had dedicated his life to one thing—resisting occupation—could be, simultaneously sharing his experience of the village history. Ahmed's story might serve as an exemplar of Palestinian *sumud*, the cultural steadfastness that is widely documented as a stance central to Palestinian resistance (e.g. Lentin 2016; Mason and Dajani 2018). Recent events, however, made him to pause and lower his voice:

> My father's, mother's, and grandmother's tombs are on the other side of the Wall ... and they decided to build a small tunnel for me to visit the graves. They said they will put electric fence around the tombs, but I refused and said, "if you put it, I will take it away". They ended up making the tunnel for me, but said they will put gates on it.

The gates, which were eventually installed, do not merely prevent unobstructed passage to the lands in the "seam zone". As another interviewee, Fahed told us, whose family's olive trees fell behind the separation wall in the surrounding area, four years had passed before mainly the eldest from each family were allowed to pass through the gates to visit their lands again this year. "Last time all the olives were stolen by settlers", he said, "but this time hundreds of years old trees were damaged and really dry, almost dying".

As the stolen olives, damaged trees and settler music all indicate, the wall does not simply restrict mobility or ease confiscation; it also creates precarious zones more susceptible to informal colonial conduct. Ahmed continued: "After they uprooted the trees, I planted hundreds of new ones, but a fire burned a lot of those trees ... They were working on my land to build the wall, and set a fire, which spread". Similar "accidents" also took place for other villagers. Another farmer, Omar, was much more straightforward when telling me about his encounter with colonial violence: "When they build the wall here... they made strong explosions near the house. They said they did it to open up a road, so that the collapse of the house would look like it was demolished by accident". Omar continued:

> When they saw the house was cracked, but not collapsed, they came back in December, and made four holes on the ground, so that the rainwater would flow into them, and pass under the tiling ... They tried to put the house into very bad condition and in every possible way to make me leave.

As the accounts of Omar, Fahed, Ahmed and the olive picking exemplify, settler colonial conduct is very much in negotiation through flexible context-driven

(re)-actions, affectual countering, transformations and informal mobilisations. In terms of governing, the cases show how precarious compartments enable a flexible use of several formal and informal, direct and indirect, even contrary tactics of colonial precarisation. It is curious that, while the zones were precarising for Al-Walajees, they were simultaneously used to implement improving practices that aimed to make "the wasteland bloom" the colonial narratives of history and space—from archaeological reconstructions and parks to security fences and gates (e.g. Yiftachel 2002). Such tactics, as Elizabeth Povinelli (2016:16, 173–174) holds, aim to denude life, not merely to dispose it, but to make it hospitable to improvements. Accordingly, several informal practices were used to evict Omar, to make him leave by his own will, while simultaneously several development plans for opening up a new luxury hotel next to Omar's piece of land, for instance, were presented (see Jerusalem 5800 2016:8, 57). Similarly, the uprooting of Ahmed's olive trees and the denial of access to his fields were done to increase security—to protect valuable life from the harm of the colonised population. The park, with its artificial lakes and archaeological reconstructions, required that the life of the colonised was first liquidated into a reproducible space. Such improvements arguably present a colonial biopolitics that erases life, and modifies the rock, to make the sites of dwelling dead, reborn and bloom the settler narratives. As such, these techniques used the vulnerability and fragility of life to fuel their "improving" metamorphoses, embedding biopolitical tactics in the manifold ways of installing precarities via compartments. And yet, as the manifoldness in governing practice indicates, such distribution of precarity is not merely marrying erasure with improvement, but shows how precarities can be induced by flexibly connecting the settler colonial claims of sovereignty to biopolitical practices that "remove to establish a better policy" and an "ideal social body" (Veracini 2010:4).

The aspect of negotiation continued to come forth in ways in which settler colonial precarisation was implemented, not only through the tactics of "erasing improvements", but through the informal ways of bodily violence and harming. This was particularly the case with Omar, who in 2010 was informed that his family's house was to be completely cut off from the rest of the village by the Wall. As if that was not enough, in 2011 Omar's family was informed that an additional electric fence would be built around their house, while a separate door, later to be replaced by a tunnel under the wall, would be installed for the family. As Omar put it, by sardonically referring to a Zionist *terra nullus*—proverb, "they were seeking a land without a people, but were annoyed by the fact that someone was already living here".[4] Several other options were given to Omar and his family: to sell the house; to rent it on a 99-year lease; to become a partner and share the profits on his land; to accept a Jerusalem ID and/or a new piece of land. Omar refused all the options for several reasons, not least because of what he would lose in exchange for an ID that would not grant him a full citizenship and could be taken away from him on spurious grounds,[5] but also as the village would lose yet another piece of land. That's when, Omar recalls, "the violence against my family began":

> They told me they were going to teach me "a different way". Once soldiers hit my son with the back of the gun ... 14 stitches were needed. My wife was pregnant and they used violence against her too ... I was harassed and arrested about ten times.

The last time Omar was arrested, he was hit so hard he was in the prison hospital for two months, a fact which, Omar found out later, was not officially recorded in any way. Omar's family's case presents an example of how the compartmentalisation of colonial violence into precarious zones enables a use of other, complementary forms of violence that are masked under de-politicised administrative orders and development plans while simultaneously brought to the level of the body and the everyday. But most notably, Omar's case shows, together with several others such as the one of Ahmed, how the bureaucratic and administrative violence is linked back to the military violence of bodily harm, always negotiated and flexibly implemented as part of the actual governing practice (for further examples, see Al-Walaja Withstand 2018).

In the beginning of 2016, after Omar's case had received significant media attention and several delegates from different consulates, even Palestinian ministers, visited his place, Omar's family decided to push the case to the "highest court level possible". Omar explained how the court case was framed as neutrally as possible: "the case was about three kids, and their mother, wanting to live a normal life, away from the violence". "We are farmers, who have sheep", he continued; "farmers, who are not allowed to live peacefully in their own land". Soon after the new court case was initiated, Israeli government representatives contacted Omar—this time they wanted to negotiate peacefully.

> Dozens of Israeli officials came here to check everything we wrote about the legal case was right. They went around, looked at my land, did a tour around the house, saw the olive trees, the sheep and the well, pretending they didn't already know everything.

The visitors were willing to negotiate with Omar on how his family could live a normal life. "Normal", for the Israeli administration, was a paper that listed 40 rules for Omar's family. Omar presented his own requirements and after an eight-month-long exchange the list was shortened to 16 rules. These security rules ranked from the ones declaring "no clashes with settlers were allowed" to the ones that ruled, for instance, that each visitor of the family had to give their name and ID to IDF hours before visiting, they could not stay later than 12 am, and should leave their car in front of the gate of a tunnel that connected Omar's house to the village.

Although the encounters discussed above show how the spatialisation of colonial violence fluctuates between physical and menacing, formal and informal, antagonist and affirmative, sovereign and biopolitical, planned and ad hoc practice, they also exemplify how the colonial power becomes resisted, redirected, shaped and negotiated in everyday encounters. As Omar's and Ahmed's accounts show, increasing precarities did not passivise but fuelled new actions and counter-conducts, at times limiting, cancelling and redirecting the colonial practices, further underlining the incompleteness and transformative nature of governing. And yet, such "negotiated precarities" can always push in opposite directions: they

can turn administrative orders to military violence, but also vice versa. Unlike Omar, who was able to keep his home (though with high costs), the fate of the many in Al-Walaja has been the cruel reality of house demolitions. About half of the residents in the Jerusalem part of Al-Walaja (*Ain Jawaizeh*) now have demolition orders for their houses (FAW 2017). While some house demolitions are related to the construction of the Separation Wall, most of the cases are epiphenomenal to Israel's strict permission policies in the East Jerusalem and the West Bank Area C. The establishment of ambiguous, zone-specific permit regimes (Berda 2017)—another way of spatialising precarisation—has in particular forced Palestinian residents to build on their own lands without permits (e.g. Wari 2011). "This is an area of high point of interest", one of the village council members of Al-Walaja held; "they might disappear for a year but always come back, because they don't want any expansion here", further explaining how after the recently added part of the Wall was finished (May 2017), eight houses were demolished, while orders to cease construction were also given to several other villagers (see also Ma'an 2017).

Demolitions, however, consist of more than turning houses into "piles of rubble". As Harker (2009:324–326) reminds us, house demolitions should be considered as a way of targeting all those "economic, social and cultural" connections that constitute one's *home*. In Al-Walaja, for instance, villagers had often taken loans to build or extend their houses, while it is not uncommon to find Palestinians destroying their own homes under the threat of fines and imprisonment (see Wari 2011:468–469). Constant night raids and a concrete wall behind the living room window also effect demolition of homes by "killing us slowly without a war", as one interviewee held. Life under the pending demolition orders, with all the necessary items "packed into bags" (in case Israeli soldiers enter unexpectedly), alone causes "constant fear and anxiety about the future", as another interviewee from Al-Walaja said. In some cases, a "mere note had been left at night", the residents being unaware of the demolition until the bulldozers arrived in the morning. As Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015:102) has suggested, fear of losing a home can alone become a significant factor that hampers and destroys daily life, posing what she refers to as the "demolition before the demolition". Here time, waiting and prolonging become crucial elements of governing. The limbo does not merely ensure the precarious situation, with all the fears and anxieties, prevails among the colonised, but constitutes an entire system of "effective inefficiency", where the slowness and tardiness in administrative processes is used to induce further precarities (see Berda 2017; Joronen 2017b). As a field researcher of a Bethlehem-based NGO described, many Palestinians in the region do apply for building permits before construction, but face the precarities of slow-motion governing: "houses can be there for six years before Israeli officials start to claim undue payments, with high rates of interest"—a situation that is economically unbearable for many.

The slow-motion governing is also evident in the way in which Al-Walajees living in *Ain Jawaizeh* are constantly excluded from services and infrastructure. On occasion, the residents of *Ain Jawaizeh* have been promised a change in their state of affairs, on condition that they legalise their residency statuses by applying for the Jerusalem ID. Despite the fact that Israel considers this part of the village to

be under the Jerusalem district, only a few applications of the residents who lived in the Jerusalem part of the village before 1967 were eventually approved. The slow-motion governing is, this shows, not merely about passive waiting, but about activation and negotiations:

> They [Israeli authorities] asked us to form a different council, different from the one under the Palestinian Authority. They wanted to split the village council and … to form a separate village called "*Ain Jawaizeh*" that they would then consider giving services. We totally rejected this idea, since we don't want to split Al-Walaja.

Instead of forming a separate village council, the council member underlined the urgent need for a building plan, not only to (counter-)map Al-Walaja, but to start improving the situation in *Ain Jawaizeh*. "We don't want to build up a park and put money on it, and see it demolished", he said, referring to the hope that a formally accepted village-wide building plan would prevent Israel from promoting colonial violence through demolition orders and denial of permits. Indeed, counter-planning and expert knowledge are important tools for resisting dubious plans, to which the recent study of Rosol (2014) in Vancouver also offers an insight. Resistance against re-zoning policies, she shows, did not aim at mere "liberation from an oppressor", but took a form of "counter-conduct" that used expert knowledge to demand different types of development (Rosol 2014:75). The role of planning and expert knowledge in Al-Walaja, however, seems more complex, particularly as different zones—Area C, Area B, seam zone, and the Jerusalem part of the village—are run by different (but overlapping) regulations, permit systems and logics (Berda 2017:38). This is shown in the way in which the above-mentioned village council member on the one hand underlined the need for a comprehensive town plan, while on the other hand fearing such plans might split the village into separate administrative zones, the plan thus functioning to further enforce and normalise the colonial compartmentalisation of the village. Although "something needs to be done", the council member aired, in order to improve the precarious conditions in the village, administrative counter-knowledge would further normalise the spatial divides in the village. As the council member concluded, "it's a sword with two edges—if we do it, it will stick us, if we don't do it, it will hit us anyway".

Conclusion

As the paper has shown, permits, development plans, restrictions and conservation all exemplify how occupation is spatialised into compartments, where the Palestinian life becomes exposed to manifold combinations of even contrary colonial practices. Such zonings enable the state of Israel to flexibly govern Palestinian spaces, but also to reinforce vulnerabilities on the level of the body and the everyday. Fieldwork in Al-Walaja showed how brutal violence and harassments have become part of administrative governing, and how they are often accompanied with vulnerabilities related to racial divides and accessibility, atmospheric intimidations and estrangements, and security measures that work as a pretext for home demolitions and the appropriation of land. Further, the formal act of

compartmentalisation facilitates more informal acts—from intimidating settler music, stolen olives and damaged trees to accidental fires, explosions and floating water—and indirect effects such as fearful and anxious waiting of home demolitions. These dynamics of precarity are cumulatively central to an understanding of how settler colonial violence is implemented, negotiated and transformed in Al-Walaja.

In order to deal with this complexity, I have shown how taking the narratives and practices of the colonised, particularly the ways in which Palestinians encounter the indirect, informal and overlapping ramifications of governmental processes in their daily lives, as a point of departure places research in the middle of the "actual messiness" of governing practice. I further suggested the notion of "negotiated precarity" as capable of covering the political uses of precarity as a flexible tool of governing, but also the ways in which precarities engender action, resistance and (social) ways of alleviating and transforming the colonial violence. The focus on "negotiated precarities", I have further shown, affords a methodological and ethical stance ignoring the spatial imaginaries and practices of the settler colonial regime (e.g. Veracini 2010), further acknowledging the cracks, incompleteness and transformations in the practice of governing. Moreover, the notion of negotiation helps to acknowledge how counter-conduct, disobedience, pertinacity, hope, solidarity and other ways of erasing, diminishing, redirecting and cancelling the effects of power are all part of the "art of governing" (Legg 2018), often with unexpected ways, as the example of counter-planning in Al-Walaja exemplified. Yet, in all accounts the Al-Walajees were activated rather than merely passivised and victimised by their precarious situation, precarity thus standing between the activating and passivating, or subjugating and affirming condition. This signifies not only the uncertainty and unpredictability of how settler colonialism can be spatially practiced, but also how existing Palestinian spaces affect, transform, redirect and reorganise aims to spatialise precarity. Acknowledging such dynamics helps in recognising how the political violence is entwined around everyday vulnerabilities and negotiations of power that are often ignored in geopolitical narratives on Palestine/Israel, but also in maintaining a sensitivity to politics and hope in sites, where one hardly expects to find any room left for their appearance (see Hage 2009; Joronen and Griffiths 2019b). To understand such manifoldness in distributing precarity, a more spatially grounded study of settler colonial power is needed, as is a clearer articulation of the ways in which ontological precariousness haunts all efforts to govern, act and resist. Precarity may be spatially and politically distributed as settler colonial conduct, but it is never reducible solely to manifestations of power and desires to dominate.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

[1] In Gaza the situation remains significantly different, particularly due to Israel's blockage of the Gaza Strip after Hamas' electoral victory in 2006 (see Joronen 2016a).

[2] According to Braier (2013), the "Jerusalem 2000" plan (also known as the "Jerusalem Master Plan 2020") has offered a guideline for the Jerusalem municipality and district planning since the end of 2008 (for more details, see Jabareen 2010; Wari 2011).

[3] Names have been changed to protect the anonymity, unless the interviewee wanted to appear with his/her own name. Interviewees are named only if they are quoted more than once.

[4] "Land without a people for a people without a land" (Said 1979:9). The origin, meaning and the use of the proverb, however, are under dispute (e.g. Muir 2008), though the colonial *terra nullus*-motif has clearly been an essential part of the Zionist narratives of "empty land" (e.g. Yiftachel 2002:224–225), with "two millennia of neglect" now made into "agricultural and botanic miracles" (Long 2009:65).

[5] Since the Oslo Agreements, East Jerusalemites have been increasingly targeted with deportations implemented through the "center of life" policy. The policy ties the renewal of residency rights ("Jerusalem ID") to the arbitrary requirement that Palestinians need to meet in order to prove their centre of life is in Jerusalem, thus creating stateless persons that exist, not outside the law, but within Israel's citizenship legislation (see Jefferies 2012; Tawil-Souri 2012).

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