

**THE QUANDARY OF 'MADE IN CHINA': ECONOMIC SURVIVAL IN THE
SAFE ZONE**

PALESTINE'S IMPORT TRADE FROM CHINA SINCE 1994

Submitted by Oliver Hayakawa to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the
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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an alternative prism to analyse China's prevailing influence in Palestine. Rather than a focus on China's potential role as a mediator of the Israel-Palestine conflict, it examines the impact of China-Palestine trade (specifically Chinese imports) on the West Bank since the signing of the Protocol on Economic Relations in 1994. The study argues that Chinese imports play a key role in supporting what this thesis terms the 'Safe Zone' of Palestinian economic activity: an opportunity for economic survival in the absence of viable alternatives following decades of Israeli occupation. I investigate how and why this commerce emerged, where it is most prevalent, and what are its political implications.

This nuanced perspective into the complexities of a globalised Palestinian economy is achieved by adopting the conceptual framework of 'globalisation from below' (GFB) to unpack this trade through an inductive and interpretivist research paradigm. This entails sidelining the use of official trade data for a more ethnographically informed methodology utilising participant observation and both semi and unstructured interviews conducted in trader cities in China, the ports and checkpoints governed by Israel, to the markets in Palestine. In Palestine, a 'diverse' and 'extreme' case selection strategy (Hebron and Barta'a) are employed to show that practices associated with GFB are not homogenously experienced in the West Bank.

The thesis finds that the rise and proliferation of such commerce is an outcome of Zionist settler colonialism enacted through a range of formal and informal Israeli occupation policies: specifically, de-development and deterritorialisation. The resultant trade economy that emerges under such conditions is, therefore, not deemed a response to an 'event', but part of the 'structure' of an ongoing settler colonial project. Concurrently, the findings show that the Safe Zone is double edged, as Israel's preeminent capacity to regulate this commerce means that it can use it as a mechanism to offer a Palestinian the rewards of economic gain, but at the cost of subservience to ongoing Israeli control.

The case studies evidence this by showing the different economic practices that prevail at these sights, but also the spectrum of responses a Palestinian trader might adopt in the absence of a unified strategy of political struggle. This includes behaviours of both individual and collective acquiescence as well as non-violent political resistance towards Israeli settler colonialism. Those engaged in Palestinian commerce are shown to play notable roles beyond economic actors, but for their impact on broader political dynamics.

This approach from 'below' contributes to an additional interpretation of the Palestinian economy by researching a lesser studied form of economic activity and their affiliated actors. The implications of this are notable as they firstly stress the limited insights that are available from formal trade data in a study of globalised trade in general, and Palestinian commerce in particular. Secondly, they highlight the pervasiveness of Israeli settler colonialism upon all facets of Palestinian life while challenging misleading paradigms such as 'conflict' that are more regularly deployed to explain that which transpires in Palestine. Thirdly, they offer Chinese policy makers a valuable perspective to better understand the impact of their trade with Palestine and how it is invariably entangled in broader issues of Israeli domination. In so doing, hopefully informing Chinese policies that recognise the importance of the Safe Zone to Palestinian livelihoods, but also ones that are effectively contextualised and contingent on challenging ongoing Zionist settler colonialism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APJP: Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine
ASYCUDA: Automated System for Customs Data
BMC: Businessman Card
B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
DCO: District Coordination Office
GDP: Gross domestic product
IFI: International Financial Institution
IMF: International Monetary Fund
ICBS: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics
MAS: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute
oPt: Occupied Palestinian Territories
UN OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PA: Palestinian Authority
PER: Protocol on Economic Relations or Paris Protocol
PCBS: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLO: Palestine Liberation Organisation
PMA: Palestinian Monetary Authority
UN: United Nations
USAID: United States Agency for International Development
UN Comtrade: United Nations International Trade Statistics Database
UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WB: World Bank
WBGs: West Bank and Gaza Strip

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“There is a saying in Palestine, If a Palestinian has \$10,000 in savings, he should buy a container of Chinese goods and set up a shop!”: it was a quotation I was to hear on many occasions, yet for a long time it was merely an anecdote that highlighted the significance of China-Palestine trade from a purely economic perspective, but told me little about the conflict between Israel-Palestine in general, and China’s potential role as a mediator in the conflict in particular – the subject in which I was really interested. This was until I sat with Nadar, an aged Palestinian shopkeeper, in his shop in downtown Hebron discussing his most recent trip to China. As Nadar lambasted the Israelis for every way in which they affected his ability to do business, it was difficult to understand why he so relentlessly pursued such a way of making a living. The answer was simple: “this is safe for us”. That is despite all the obstacles imposed by Israel even he could not deny that he made a respectable income from trading in Chinese goods, and that such commerce was an integral way for him “to breathe”. To breathe, and so to survive, was to encapsulate how China-Palestine commerce permeated through multiple facets of the conflict, in particular how a Palestinian must adapt in the face of relentless Israeli domination that seeks his elimination. The opening quotation therefore takes on an entirely different meaning and poignant significance. (Field notes, Hebron, April 2018)

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the study of China-Palestine relations has principally focused on the possibility of Beijing becoming an active participant in the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This has been most notable since Chinese President Xi Jinping presented his 'four-point' peace proposal in 2013, but also in the wake of China's expanding economic and political role in the Middle East more broadly as part of its landmark Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Bianchi 2015; Chen 2015; Dorraj 2015; Medzini 2015; Shichor 2015).

The prevailing view, however, is that China's efforts have been primarily rhetorical with as yet little tangible impact in the absence of "innovative solutions, clear milestones or timetable" (Evron 2015). This is indicative of Beijing's transition from a once "active" and vocal supporter of Palestinian rights' to a relatively "passive" actor in the resolution of the conflict (Burton 2016a).¹ This has seen Chinese policy increasingly driven by a propensity towards conflict management rather than conflict resolution as it concerns itself more with the security of its economic interests and balancing US hegemony in the region (Chaziza 2013). The Palestinians too appear to have resigned themselves to the fact that China may not make a genuine difference to the 'peace process', however much they might welcome such a contribution (Burton 2016b).²

A political resolution to the conflict must of course remain the priority and any contribution towards this from China warrants scholarly attention, but it is important at the same time not to sideline other aspects of China's relations with Palestine. A focus less on high-level rhetoric and peace proposals but instead on lower level interactions has the potential to shed light on different facets of China-Palestine relations. China-Palestine trade is comparatively under researched, yet it is possibly the most visible and tangible aspect of the prevailing Chinese influence in Palestine; evidenced by the abundance of Chinese products that adorn almost every shop and market stall.

¹ For literature dedicated to early China-Palestine bilateral ties see: Cooley 1972; Harris 1977; 1993; Shichor 1977; Harris 1977.

² Literature on China-Israel relations increasingly points to heightened China-Israel economic ties at the cost of China's interest in conflict resolution, see: Shai 2009; Chen 2012; Evron 2017a; 2017b; Tobias 2015.

This commerce has helped to sustain an increasingly consumer driven Palestinian economy, not just through the influx of affordable goods, but by offering a select number of Palestinians a lucrative avenue for economic gain, and many others a critical opportunity for economic survival. This trade is a key lynchpin of what this thesis terms the Safe Zone of economic development. That is, a space where Palestinians -such as Nadar- are able “to breathe” in the absence of viable alternative economic opportunities following decades of oppressive Israeli occupation policy.

The value of this transnational trade -specifically imports- is, however, impossible to calculate, as official statistics mask the complex web of legal and illegal, licit and illicit transactions and practices that Palestinian traders navigate as they pursue the fruits of globalisation. To truly understand the significance of such commerce requires going beyond an exploration of trade data, but rather an unpacking of the factors that drive this economy and their broader implications on the Palestinian people.

The unique and challenging conditions confronting Palestinian traders reinforce the need to research Palestinian globalisation from an alternative perspective. In the case of this thesis it means an approach from ‘below’ where formal statistics are sidelined for an interpretivist epistemological approach reliant on extensive in-field observations and the insights of those actively engaged in the process. Though this method cannot uncover Palestine’s true international trade values, it can offer greater context and texture to lesser-acknowledged sides of an increasingly globalised Palestinian commercial sector.

Yet to fully understand that which transpires ‘below’, it simultaneously requires an effective critique of the structures imposed upon it from ‘above’. Specifically, as this thesis will argue, how those Palestinians seeking to survive through the economic tools available ‘below’ must do so in the face of a Zionist settler colonial ‘above’ that has, for decades, sought to dispossess them of their rights, and importantly, their land. This pertinent point of departure is, in fact, the key puzzle that underpins this thesis.

That is, by adopting the settler colonial paradigm it then requires one to question the extent to which the rise and ongoing expansion of economic activity characteristic of China-Palestine trade is intertwined with a 'structured' Israeli agenda designed to foster the demand and supply that drives such commerce, but also how Israeli policies create the spaces where such economic activity can most readily prevail. Moreover, if the proliferation of this prominent form of commercial activity is an intended outcome of Israeli occupation policy, how and why does Israel allow such economic survival -the Safe Zone- if the ultimate goal of Zionist settler colonialism is supposedly Palestinian elimination?

It is within such a context that it is also essential to unpack the spectrum of responses available to Palestinian actors engaged in a trade sector so underpinned by Chinese goods. This is because, as rightfully stated by notable Palestinian scholar George Abed: "every economic act is to be judged as to whether it reinforces the occupation or weakens it, whether or not it promotes dependency or self-reliance" (1988 p.9). This means that participation in the Palestinian trade sector can, arguably, be either an act of acquiescence or a challenge to ongoing Israeli domination. Herein lies a critical tension to be found in the interdependence of the 'above' and 'below' in the case of Palestine.

This thesis engages with these issues through the following research questions:

1. How has formal and informal Israeli occupation policy shaped Palestinian import trade from China since 1994?
2. How has formal and informal Israeli occupation policy made space for the Palestinian trade economy?
3. What are the political implications of the Palestinian trade economy on Israel's occupation policy?

These questions are, therefore, not intended to direct a study of the trade of goods per say, but a humanising of the Palestinian political economy by drawing attention to the varied voices and experiences of a subjugated people, and their broader impact on the conflict. In so doing, highlighting the pervasiveness of

Israeli policy across all aspects of Palestinian life, and how even the day to day trade in Chinese goods cannot be removed from the prism of settler colonialism. As such, China-Palestine trade cannot be untangled from many important elements of the conflict such as the current absence and potential future viability of Palestinian economic (and by virtue political) sovereignty.

The contribution of alternative and nuanced considerations of Zionist settler colonialism is key at a time when academia and activism are seeking to reframe false paradigms of, for example, 'conflict' and 'occupation'; a conceptual shift that is integral to challenging perennially flawed policies that focus on varied forms of peace building or conflict mediation, without adequately considering the necessity for some degree of settler decolonisation and an honest reflection of historical injustices. By offering an additional and previously unexplored facet to this debate this thesis will hopefully, even if only in a small way, contribute towards a shift that might lead to a more just resolution.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To bridge what would otherwise appear as disconnected socio-economic and political phenomenon, and seemingly unrelated sites of economic exchange, this thesis merges analytical paradigms that have not yet been deployed together. In particular, the conceptualisation of the 'below' and 'above' is integral to how this thesis interprets its empirical findings. Specifically, the type of 'globalisation' that this research is interested in ('below'), but also the broader political structures in operation where such economic activity unfolds ('above'). The adopted concepts are naturally the scholarly fields to which my research initially contributes to, but also informs both the selection of my case studies in Palestine and the methodological approaches required to extract the relevant data.

The form of 'globalisation' that is the focus of this thesis is termed 'globalisation from below' (GFB). A paradigm of globalisation that can both contradict, and importantly, often compliment, globalisation as conventionally perceived, or as presented by its 'hegemonic' agents, namely, but not limited to, transnational corporations, global governance institutions and the states with whom they co-opt or collaborate with in their promulgation of neoliberal capitalism (Ribeiro

2009) – ‘globalisation from above’ (GFA). But while the practices affiliated to GFB are often highly visible, they are inadequately acknowledged or even understood as they tend to sit outside formal mechanisms of accountability, and thus, GFB is often considered as a synonym for criminal activity (see Naim 2005).

A holistic study of GFB instead shows a more complex picture, one in which the actors -be they part of the formal or informal sector- are merely engaging with globalisation on the terms that their environment allows. Their priority is often not illegal profiteering but upward mobility in conditions where they might otherwise be left marginalised. Indeed, many of their ‘illegal’ practices are rather an act of defiance against a state or governing authority whom they neither trust nor wish to enrich with their taxes. These acts might be illegal but are often not condemned by their peers. As such, GFB is better understood as predominantly a manifestation of (il) licit acts, formally illegal but socially licit (Shendel and Abraham 2005). This is the prism through which this thesis sees GFB and the affiliated practices of Palestinians engaged in such commerce. These are insights that cannot be found in official trade statistics, but are dependent on ethnographic approaches to unpack GFB’s varied manifestations.

The ‘above’ in this thesis is not specifically in reference to neoliberalism as characteristic of a conventional understanding of GFA. Rather, this thesis proposes that Palestinian GFB operates within a settler colonial ‘above’ that informs Israeli occupation policy in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). This reinforces the notion that to effectively unpack Palestinian GFB requires one to first consider it as part of a broader Zionist ‘structure’ rather than a response to an ‘event’, as settler colonial logic argues (Wolfe 1999). This means that Palestinian economic survival as characteristic of many Palestinian GFB practices, must too be seen through a broader paradigm of a settler colonial informed ‘logic of elimination’ that has manifested into decades of formal and informal policy designed to subjugate and ultimately remove the native Palestinian population from their land (see Wolfe 1999; 2001a; 2008).

The rise and proliferation of GFB type activities will be framed primarily in response to two facets of Israeli settler colonial policy: de-development and deterritorialisation. The former, a strategy to limit sustainable economic

development through policies that include, but are not limited to, undermining the productive and institutional capacity of the Palestinian economy. The latter, a practice to obstruct the ability of the PA to credibly govern the territorial spaces over which it supposedly holds jurisdiction. In so doing, reinforcing the contention that it is in fact Israel that is preeminently responsible for the governance of Palestinian social, economic and political life.

EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

To facilitate the ethnographic approach required of a GFB study my point of departure is to adopt China-Palestine trade as a micro study of the processes and experiences of globalised Palestinian trade under settler colonialism. Though other country case studies could offer similar insights on a smaller scale, as Palestine's predominantly second largest source of imports since the heightened liberalisation of the Palestinian trade sector following the signing of the Paris Protocol (PER) in 1994, China is a preeminent contributor to transnational Palestinian commerce through its provision of affordable goods that formally constitute approximately 5% of the value of Palestinian imports - while some believe that they represent up to 70% of Palestinian market place products (Field notes, Sept. 2017); a role Chinese goods similarly perform in other economies across the world.

An insightful picture of globalised Palestinian trade under settler colonialism also requires a consideration of the different spaces where it exists and operates; it is not homogenously experienced across the whole of the West Bank as the influence of Israeli policy varies in different Palestinian commercial settings. Based on a 'diverse' case and an 'extreme' case selection strategy I specifically explore two sites of Palestinian economic activity that were either formed or underwent significant transformation in the post-PER era, and rely extensively on the importation and reselling of Chinese goods. Importantly, these two case studies do not exist in isolation but are nodes within a complex ecosystem of globalised trade that run, for example, from market cities in China through the Israeli ports of entry like Ashdod and Haifa. The significance of these additional sites to my empirical case studies in general, and Palestinian GFB in particular, results in regular referencing to these places.

The first case study is the West Bank's largest city of Hebron, whose merchant community is considered to comprise of the most influential and active set of actors in the Palestinian trade economy. I chose Hebron as a 'diverse' case because it offers insights into different types of GFB actors due to the particular geographical configuration of the city. Specifically, Hebron's unique division into H1 (Palestinian control), H2 (Israeli control) and the grey spaces bordering the two, show that deterritorialisation and its impacts can exist in the very heart of a Palestinian city and how it results in notably different experiences for those active in each space. As such, Hebron offers a spectrum of different Palestinian responses to globalised Palestinian trade in a manner that other Palestinian cities could not.

Secondly, I chose a Seam Zone market village named Barta'a that sits on the Palestinian side of the 'Green Line' but Israeli side of the 'Separation Wall', thus almost fully deterritorialising the village from PA governance. As an 'extreme' case it offers a unique insight as to how GFB activity operates on the geographic fringes of the contested 'border' of Israel and Palestine, and is an example of the role of 'cross border' commerce between Palestinians and the various subgroups of Israeli society. The study of Barta'a is also an opportunity to consider the extent to which an entire Palestinian village comes together to maximise its particular market economy with the transaction of Chinese goods being at the heart of these commercial interactions.

Each case study in Palestine is an opportunity to identify how formal and informal Israeli policy manipulates and regularly undermines Palestinian political, economic and social sovereignty, and how this can contribute towards heightened (il) licit practices indicative of GFB. This will be achieved by considering how these economic spaces were originally formed and operate today; who are the key actors and specifically to what extent they are conditioned by Israeli policy (such as being granted access to 'permits'); how do the actors - specifically traders- interpret their (il) licit practices and relate to Palestinian regulatory authorities; and importantly, how each site and its actors contribute towards either a challenge or acquiescence to Israeli domination. These are insights that could scarcely be identified through formal trade statistics, but rather called upon the ethnographic approach that was adopted in each case study.

This included multiple months in the field engaging primarily in participant observation and both informal and unstructured interviews.

CENTRAL ARGUMENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

The contention that the Palestinian trade sector operates under the dictate of Zionist settler colonialism highlights the intricate connection and interdependence of the 'above' and 'below'. This is why this thesis stresses that the Safe Zone must too be considered from the view of both Palestinian actors ('below') and the Israeli authorities ('above'). For the former, the thesis will show how many Palestinians see the Safe Zone of economic activity as the possibilities found in the GFB economy in the absence of opportunities from more sustainable and productive sectors that Israel has progressively stifled due to decades of formal and informal de-development policy. While the prevalence, and often lucrateness, of (il) licit activities characteristic of GFB is generally found in cases of heightened deterritorialisation as dictated by Israel.

But it is the value of the Safe Zone from the Israeli perspective that is, arguably, more insightful. For Israel, its preeminent capacity to -at any moment- disrupt the sustainable functioning of the Palestinian trade sector, means that it can also use the Safe Zone as a mechanism to encourage, or even coerce more favourable behaviors. I will show that such leverage derives from, but is not limited to, Israeli control of the different ports of entry where imported Palestinian goods are first processed, its ability to limit a Palestinian trader access to his shop, to its influence over the viability of the consumer base that underpins Palestinian GFB.

All these are -to varying degrees- subject to the whims of Israeli occupation policy as they are affected by, for example, heightened security checks of Palestinian imports, the enactment of 'closure' policies or the withholding of Palestinian taxes necessary to pay public sector employees. As much as GFB is a tool for Palestinian economic survival, therefore, it is also a facet of Israel's ongoing subjugation of the Palestinian economy and people, offering a life line to Palestinians while reinforcing Israel's overarching control - as it has similarly done throughout the history of Zionist expansion in Palestine (see *Chapter Five*). From

both an Israeli and Palestinian perspective, the Safe Zone is, therefore, simply two sides of the same coin that offers the rewards of economic gain at the cost of individual and collective subservience to Israeli settler colonialism.

This forms a key basis upon which the thesis interprets its empirical findings in relation to the broader political implications of GFB activity; specifically, the spectrum of Palestinian responses in the absence of a strategy of collective resistance against Israeli domination. This includes, but is not limited to: those who have established great wealth through trade, and in so doing, have leveraged opportunities presented to them by Israel, such as access to the Businessman Card (BMC); traders who remain in their shops as part of a broader strategy to remain steadfast as an act of political non-violent resistance particular to Palestine; and in Barta'a, where an entire village is caught in a quandary of profit at the cost of broader conflict and ongoing Israeli domination, to ensure the former requires the actors of Barta'a's GFB economy to keep it a "silent village". There is, therefore, an ongoing tension for many Palestinians seeking to gain from the Safe Zone that is not found in other GFB related literature. In particular how engagement in GFB activity under settler colonialism invariably results in some form of either acquiescence or resistance to Israeli control.

In the case of acquiescence, this is especially apparent when considering the political pacification -in practice if not rhetoric- of many of the actors who are fearful of losing the economic benefits they have carved out through trade, or its affiliated activities. While this resonates with other cases of GFB where economic gain is the principal objective of its participants, studies have never considered how such practices might reinforce a case of settler colonial domination. Such a scenario is why certain cases of GFB in Palestine contest the conventional framework of (il) licit, but that (il) legal is more appropriate. That is, business practices that are formerly legal, but socially deemed illicit due to their inherent capacity to reinforce or at least normalise the occupation.

Conversely, in the case of resistance, though the practices of agents engaged in GFB activity regularly defy the world of GFA, it is not necessarily their intention to introduce a new economic or political order (Ribeiro 2009, p.313). Rather, in Palestine, the responses of these GFB actors are both intentional and intricately

affiliated as to how they choose to challenge the settler colonial reality under which they must reside. This thesis' study of the Safe Zone, therefore, expands the scholarly field of GFB by highlighting the far broader motivations and political implications of those engaged in globalised commerce worldwide. Of greater importance to Palestine, however, is how it also offers an additional prism to interpret the Palestinian economy in general, and its trade with China in particular.

This includes a greater understanding of a tier of Palestinian economic activity, and its affiliated actors. That is, less a focus on macro analysis as is characteristic of the extensive amount of economic research produced by international institutions such as UNCTAD, The World Bank and the IMF; or literature dedicated principally to a critique of the 1994 Paris Protocol and its functional impact on the Palestinian domestic and international trade sector (Arnon 2007; Arnon and Weinblatt 2001; Al Hayek 2015; Elmusa and El-Jaafari 1995). Simultaneously, introducing new economic agents that are not considered part of the corrupt and crony new capitalist elite that has been the focus of much scholarship (Amundsen and Ezbidi 2002; Bouillon 2004; Dana 2014a; 2019; Nasr 2004; Nakhleh 2012). Instead, contributing towards more recent literature on 'informal entrepreneurs', the 'smuggler bourgeois' and participants in the various 'checkpoint economies' that have emerged across the oPt (Natsheh and Parizot 2015; Pelham 2012; 2015; Tawil-Souri 2009).

In so doing, supporting scholarly efforts to better theorise the Palestinian political economy. Specifically, though the settler colonial paradigm has been deployed in scholarship more extensively in recent years it has -to date- rarely been from a contemporary economic perspective nor in relation to how it defines economic activity at the level characteristic of GFB. The influence of an occupation policy that is informed by an overriding settler colonial ideology on the 'bottom up' and globalised economic practices of the native community makes this thesis's research so unique. While the role of China-Palestine trade in underpinning this phenomenon fills an important gap in how one should appropriately evaluate the impact of commercial relations with a third partner when operating in an environment of settler colonialism, but also how the settler colonial power can use this relationship to further its own cause.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter Two – Methodology: provides a detailed insight into how this thesis came to be more than just a study of formal trade data. The chapter is divided into two parts. *Part One* discusses my methodological position, case study selection and the principal methods that I adopted. I also note some key variations in data collection across my two main empirical case studies. *Part Two* takes the reader on a journey tracking the trade of goods from China to Palestine to highlight how the adoption of this ‘bottom up’ methodology was key, particularly in the early stages of my research, to contesting the credibility of official trade data, while providing the framework for a deeper exploration of globalised Palestinian trade.

Chapter Three – Literature Review: explores the concept of ‘globalisation from below’ (GFB) and how it sits within broader debates of globalisation and economic development. This includes a brief consideration of the opposing world of ‘globalisation from above’ (GFA). I will draw from a range of case study literature to unpack GFB’s principal misconceptions, in particular to show that GFB should not be interpreted as a world of criminal activity but rather of (il) licit acts. This includes a study of the different actors and sites of GFB worldwide, but also how GFA and GFB regularly overlap.

Chapter Four – Settler Colonialism: contends that settler colonialism and the affiliated formal and informal Israeli occupation policy is the appropriate additional frame of analysis. I will unpack the field of settler colonialism in general and its wider application to the case of Palestine. The principal focus will, however, be on two facets of Israeli policy that I believe are integral to an understanding of both the rise and ongoing proliferation of Palestinian GFB: ‘de-development’ and ‘deterritorialisation’.

Chapter Five – Historical Context of Globalised Palestinian Trade: examines the rise of Palestinian GFB, and specifically the Safe Zone, as primarily a response to Israeli ‘de-development’ policy. It will provide a brief review of the pre-PER period to highlight that a form of GFB existed much earlier, but the focus of the chapter is dedicated to the conditions during the post-PER period. This will be

divided into the time immediately post-PER and the accelerated growth in trade in the post-2000 period. I also comment on the impact of Israeli policy on the consumer base that underpins Palestinian GFB.

Chapter Six – Case Study One: investigates Palestinian GFB in a city that is often considered a microcosm of the ‘occupation’ – Hebron. The chapter will present the deterritorialisation of Hebron into areas H1 and H2, and how this has drastically affected the local trade economy. This includes redefining the traditional spaces of commercial activity while creating both opportunities and challenges for Hebronite traders. I unpack three sets of traders and the varying trajectories they have undergone in response to Hebron’s deterritorialisation at a time of heightened trade with China. And importantly, how their practices either contribute towards or contest broader Israeli domination.

Chapter Seven – Case Study Two: studies Palestinian GFB in the ‘Seam Zone’; specifically the Palestinian village of Barta’a in northern West Bank. I chart the rise of the village as a site of Palestinian GFB, with particular reference to the impact of the construction of the ‘Separation Wall’ and Israel’s comparative absence in its governance of the ‘Green Line’. I highlight how such deterritorialisation results in the heightened proliferation of (il) licit practices that allow for lucrative returns for both traders and local villagers. I present how ongoing commercial gain is dependent on Barta’a’ remaining a “silent village” with sustained Israel control.

Chapter Eight – Conclusion: draws together the findings from each empirical study and presents the commonalities and variations in the manifestation of GFB in their perspective cases. I will evaluate the extent to which Palestinian GFB has been a mechanism to either support or contest Israel’s settler colonial project, and close with suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY - “NUMBERS AND STATISTICS MEAN NOTHING!”

INTRODUCTION

In every discussion about the ‘millions’ of dollars of China-Palestine trade with those actively engaged in this field -either as participants or analysts, e.g. traders or governing institutions- no one that I interviewed -either in China, Israel or Palestine- felt that these statistics were in any way realistic. For example, when citing the \$382.7million in imports from China in 2016, one of many notable Palestinian traders responded, “not millions but at least billions” (Hebron, Sept. 2017). What each respondent was alluding to was aptly summarised by one Palestinian customs broker:

There is no credibility in Palestinian trade figures! (Ramallah, June 2018).

During a meeting with the CEO of the Hebron Chamber of Commerce Mr. Al-Tamimi -the Palestinian governate where the majority of Chinese goods are destined- I was further informed of the inconsistencies in both import and export figures across different Palestinian institutions.³ For example, the Chamber’s CEO presented me with the different ‘certificates of origin’ that his Hebronite exporters required to sell their goods to China, he estimated that they valued approximately a quarter of a million dollars of exports – from Hebron alone. Yet, according Palestinian Centre Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) figures all of Palestine only exported \$61,000 to China in 2016. As for imports, based on a loose estimate derived from his regular interactions with Palestinian traders Mr. Al-Tamimi felt that Chinese imports could easily constitute \$1 billion (June 2018).

I don’t trust numbers! ... This man here (sitting in Mr. Al-Tamimi’s office), he imports about \$1 million a month. So we talk about \$12 million for just one Hebron businessman! (Mr. Tareq Al-Tamimi, Hebron, June 2018).

³ This is not an anomaly. Trade disparities within different government departments and across multiple international institutions are common. For example, see Benita and Urzua 2016.

I found a similar story in talks with the Palestinian customs department, who in the absence of sovereignty over Palestinian borders or the right to enforce authority at Israeli governed ports of entry, were unable to generate credible trade data. In the departments limited capacity to re-evaluate what it deemed as a culture of “fake” customs declarations it recognised that even when they “push it”, i.e. re-evaluate it to a higher value, it was still likely to be far from the actual figure:

When we say push it, we push by maybe 10%, but if you push it by 50% you didn't exceed the real value! (Mr. Basel Al-Deek, ASYCUDA Dept., Ramallah, Sept. 2017).

As an estimated 90% of global shipped trade is either under or non-declared it is scarcely surprising that such a phenomenon existed in China-Palestine commerce (see Nordstrom 2007, p.120). Nevertheless, such perspectives highlighted the fact that by attempting to explore this commerce from a ‘top down’ perspective -specifically, looking to the ‘official’ statistics- it did not provide an accurate picture of the multifaceted nature of China-Palestine trade. While a ‘bottom up’ approach offered the framework to identify the varied social, economic and political drivers, and subsequent trajectories, of those engaged in this commerce; individual and collective experiences that could scarcely be appreciated through statistics. Herein lies the world of globalisation from below, as aptly stated below:

Globalisation from below is below the radar of the state, and of multinational institutions, it is also beyond the reach of their apparatus of economic measurement. Formal economists cannot know globalisation from below from their figures; they can only guess (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012, p.5).

This chapter will be divided into two parts. *Part One* is an introduction to the research paradigm (*Section One*) and case studies (*Section Two*). I discuss the specific methods that were adopted, including challenges encountered and my efforts to overcome them (*Section Three*). I also note particular experiences of conducting research at my two principal case study sites. *Part Two* provides a

preliminary insight into how the 'bottom up' methodology, in the initial phases of my research, was an integral part of the inductive approach that lead me towards a more holistic exploration of globalised Palestinian trade, and my eventual research questions. This includes a focus on the Chinese market city of Yiwu (*Section Four*), the Israeli ports (*Section Five*), a discussion on the policies that promote under or non-declared trade (*Section Six*), and in conclusion how *Part One* and *Two* serve as a bridge to the following chapter (*Section Seven*).

PART ONE: METHODOLOGY

SECTION ONE: RESEARCH PARADIGM

The anecdotes as presented offered a pertinent point of departure that would inform the ontological and epistemological paradigms that guided this thesis' methodology. Specifically, a need to look beyond both the abstract objects that constituted China-Palestine commerce, or an objective assessment of official trade figures and statistics that would be more conducive to a positivist framework of research (see Kolakowski 1993; Flick 2018). A more useful philosophical positioning for this thesis was one that recognised the preeminent importance of 'context' and the value of examining the 'meanings' that motivated the various individuals engaged in globalised Palestinian trade (see Kubik 2003; Porta and Keating 2008). This meant a more relativist ontological perspective, and the affiliated necessity to unpack the multiple socially constructed realities of different actors, was critical to a holistic study from 'below' (see Bryman 1998; Neuman 2007; Schwandt 2007; Killam 2013).

Such an ontological disposition reinforced the need for me not to undertake the thesis as an objective observer but to actively explore the subjective knowledge found in the insights and experiences of Palestinian traders, and the politically constructed relations of trade in which they operated. An interpretivist epistemological approach was key under such conditions where the interdependence of researcher and participants was integral to the co-creation of the research findings (see Hudson and Ozanne 1998; Wedeen 2003). As the actors and practices that constituted the focus of this thesis straddled the line between legal/illegal and licit/illicit, to credibly interpret the world in which they

operated required a rigorous unpacking of the often complex social, economic and political contexts that defined their daily lives.

It was subsequently through an ethnographically informed methodology that I could understand and dissect what were invariably nuanced motivations, fears and ambitions of a -to date- less acknowledged nor understood set of actors that contributed towards Palestinian economic development. This meant that, in addition to a reliance on secondary data, my principle findings required multiple visits overseas over four years (2015-19): this included four field trips to Palestine and Israel for a combination of seven months, and two visits to China totaling three months. The first few trips were particularly significant to facilitate an inductive approach toward the generation of theory and the appropriate interpretation of meaning that I would build upon throughout my field work and write up stage (see Glaser and Strauss 1967).

I, therefore, did not commence my research project with a set hypothesis to test nor a rigid methodological framework that might have limited my capacity to remain open to the varied complexities found in China-Palestine trade – as would be indicative of a deductive study (Bryman 2008). I rather relied extensively on qualitative methods that aligned with my inductive and interpretivist paradigm of knowledge production, this primarily included: participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and the use of snowball sampling and informal gatekeepers, as discussed in *Section Three*. Before this it is necessary to comment on my case study selection where I applied these different methods.

SECTION TWO:CASE STUDY SELECTION

The effective selection of case studies is paramount in an interpretivist study from 'below'. This is because the use of case studies, as is common for such a research paradigm, is often critiqued for its weakness in generating findings that can be considered 'generalisable' or 'representative', and therefore reflective of the wider population (Bryman 2008). In the absence of the levels of 'external validity' that is deemed more prevalent in objective empiricist studies that adopt, for example, random sampling from a large data set, the use of single or multiple case studies can be problematic to justify (see Goertz and Mahoney 2009). This

is particularly so when case studies are often selected based on convenience or practicality, which though understandable given the many challenges a researcher might face in accessing more insightful cases, is not a sufficient methodological justification (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

The use of case studies and the 'breadth' and 'depth' that they offer has, however, increasingly been identified for its capacity to produce representative findings, and for both theory testing and theory generation (see Mabry 2008; Schofield 2004; Flyvbjerg 2006). A key mechanism to bypass the risks of a smaller sample size is to ensure that 'purposeful' selection is undertaken so as to ensure the relevant case study (or studies) are chosen (Palinkas et. al 2013). A common classification of case studies include those that might be considered, but not limited to, typical, extreme, deviant, influential, crucial, most-similar and most-different; each has the potential to serve different research enquiries while offering varied levels of representativeness (see Gerring 2008; Levy 2008; Mabry 2008; Della Porta 2008). A common set of challenges, however, is that a case study's most accurate classification is often only identified towards the latter stages of a research project, while it might simultaneously be representative of multiple categories (Flyvbjerg 2006; Bryman 2008).

The selection of case studies in Palestine can be particularly problematic due to practical limitations in travelling freely throughout the West Bank, but also from the perspective of seeking representativeness. The fragmentation of Palestinians into multiple sub groups is well documented as part of Israel's broader occupation policy and regularly parallels varying degrees of Israeli control of Palestinian life (see Naamneh et al. 2018); for example, the notable variations to be found in market places in a PA administered city or in a borderland area controlled by the Israeli military. This meant choosing a 'typical' case would be challenging, especially at the early stages of research, while the inductive nature of my project also limited the potential to identify, for example, 'deviant' or 'crucial' cases.

The goal of my case selections was to offer an insight into a broad range of sites that were both indicative of the practices found in Palestinian GFB activity, but also highly dependent on Chinese imports. As part of my settler colonial framework I also refined the selection based on my particular interest in places

where PA governance had been notably mitigated – a process of ‘deterritorialisation’ (discussed in *Chapter Four*). To achieve this I wanted to adopt a ‘diverse’ case and an ‘extreme’ case selection strategy. The former, to identify cases that presented a range of impacting variables and subsequent variances in response, while also offering the potential to note common patterns across cases (Palinkas et.al 2013; Patton 2002). The latter, to highlight an outlier that reflected the non-homogenous nature of Israeli policy towards Palestinians, but also as an exploratory approach to maximise variance that could in turn better identify what might be considered a ‘typical’ case in Palestine (Seawright and Gerring 2008; Gerring 2008; Jahnukainen 2010). The choice of Hebron and Barta’a fit these classifications.

2.1. HEBRON

As the largest commercial hub in Palestine Hebronite traders are infamous throughout the West Bank and synonymous with Chinese trade - exemplified by the Hebron Governate being the principal destination of Chinese imports to Palestine. An oft heard quote insightfully summarises the significance of Hebron to this commerce: “People in China think Hebron is a country, they don’t know about Palestine”. At the same time, Hebron is regularly referred to as a ‘microcosm’ of the occupation, mainly due to the particularly hostile conditions found in the Old City where the PA enacts limited rule and is today home to an estimated 850 Israeli settlers. The choice of Hebron as a study of China-Palestine commerce and the broader impact of Israeli occupation policies on the Palestinian trade sector, naturally influenced its selection in general, but initially as a seemingly ‘typical’ case in particular.

The complexities of Hebron, however, challenged whether it should be classified as ‘typical’. Rather, the particular geographic and political configuration of Hebron provided the opportunity to research how different traders operated in drastically divergent parts of the city: H1 (Palestinian control), H2 (Israeli control) and the grey spaces bordering the two. This included the study of traders in the heart of the Old City who can only be considered as an ‘extreme’ case due to conditions that cannot be found elsewhere in the West Bank. Though the ‘diverse’ case method requires a study of multiple cases, Hebron offered this by presenting a

range of 'cases' within one city of the West Bank. This meant a study of 'maximum variance' which could offer higher levels of representativeness (Gerring 2008; see also Rohlfing 2012).

2.2. BARTA'A

As with Hebron, the uniqueness of Barta'a can be reflected in a powerful quote: "if you divide Palestine in three sections; West Bank, Gaza and Barta'a!". The village is generally considered an anomaly due to its manifold socio-economic and political characteristics that are intricately connected to Barta'a's location in the Seam Zone: Israeli side of the Separation Wall but Palestinian side of the Green Line. As all Palestinians need an Israeli approved permit to access Barta'a -including the local residents, those with a business in the village and the PA- the village operates almost fully outside the purview of PA governance. While the lucrativeness of the local market economy is also dependent on a comparatively 'invisible' presence of the Israeli authorities in their control of the Green Line. By comparison to other West Bank case studies it is justifiably considered an 'extreme' case and shows how GFB activity prevails in both the geographic borderlands of the West Bank, and in a case of heightened mitigation of PA governance. Unlike the diversity of sites found in Hebron, the study of Barta'a was also an opportunity to focus on an entire Palestinian community that was forced to operate under similar conditions.

The range of findings each case study offered made them appropriate options for what is the first such study of Palestinian GFB, and their selection will hopefully present a useful template from which further case studies can be selected. Nevertheless, their complexities also warrant further consideration of the challenges I faced when approaching each study, and how I sought to overcome them. I will, therefore, briefly return to them at the end of the following section after a more in-depth commentary of the different methods I adopted as part of my ethnographically informed study.

SECTION THREE: METHODS IN ACTION

3.1. FINDING PARTICIPANTS: SNOWBALL SAMPLING AND INFORMAL GATEKEEPERS

Prior to my doctoral research I had visited Palestine on a number of occasions spending many hours speaking to traders, visiting the market places and meeting with government and private sector organisations that were integral to China-Palestine relations and Palestinian economic development. These trips were invaluable in providing me with the contextual knowledge and experience of conducting research in Palestine, while laying the foundation for my extensive dependence on snowball sampling and informal gatekeepers as mechanisms to broaden my participant base.

The use of snowball sampling (see Atkinson and Flint 2001) was a particularly effective technique when trying to identify Palestinians who were involved in the trade sector as not one actor can conduct this business alone (especially in a globalised context), but rather they are a facet of a complex ecosystem that depends on reliable and trusting working relationships. For example, a trader will have good connections to brokers, and brokers will have a range of contacts at the customs authorities, and so on. Therefore, by establishing a handful of good relationships I was able to plug into a far broader set of contacts who would otherwise have been hard to access. This was especially important with regard to the Israeli private sector, specifically customs brokers at the ports, as I often depended on Palestinian brokers to act as informal gatekeepers taking me directly to the offices of their Israeli counterparts so that I could be introduced as a trusted contact (see Hesse-Biber 2017, p.191).

The use of snowball sampling was integral in identifying and building contacts across larger geographical distances. So it was that on arriving in the Chinese market town of Yiwu in May 2017, I had already been given introductions to many traders by friends, relatives or business partners who I had met in Palestine. This naturally worked both ways as on returning to Palestine I brought with me an equally extensive network of contacts based on my time in Yiwu. Almost certainly these contacts across multiple sites increased my credibility as a researcher and

helped to mitigate doubts others may have had about the purpose of my interest in their business and political practices. This process was an example of what Hesse-Biber refers to as obtaining the “thumbs up” from various gatekeepers as a way to improve my overall access (2017). This particularly applied when traders across sites were from the same family as is common in the Palestinian business sector (see Nasr 2004).

This is well illustrated in the case study of Barta'a as before my field trip to China in 2017 I had actually never heard of Barta'a let alone knew a Palestinian trader who worked there. But, following a meeting with a Palestinian agent in Yiwu whose father had a shop in Barta'a, my journey into the complexities of this village begun with a brief introduction to the agent's friend in Jenin who then took me to meet a group of brothers with a shop in Barta'a who later became the principal research subjects of that empirical chapter.

The multi-sited nature of this thesis, however, meant that I regularly faced challenges in relation to the language of communication which occasionally affected the extent that I was able to undertake 'purposeful' sampling, but instead contributed to a degree of biased selection of research candidates. I was able to function quite effortlessly with English and Chinese speaking traders but without recourse to Arabic or Hebrew I needed to be more selective as to how I collected data in Israel and Palestine. Interestingly, it was often easier to speak in Chinese with those Palestinian traders in China who were less fluent in English. Nevertheless, my own lack of fluency in Arabic undermined my capacity to freely engage with those traders in my different case studies that might have been willing to support my research.

This inevitably meant that in the various market places in Palestine I was often restricted to participants based on 'opportunistic' or 'emergent' sampling, and even the generally undesired form of 'convenience' sampling - dictated primarily by the level of English of a potential participant (see Patton 2002). Though these sampling techniques are not uncommon, at least in the early stages of ethnography, it highlighted the limitations I faced when left to conduct field research completely on my own. Similarly, the issue of language also lessened my ability to remain a 'pure observer' or to conduct 'naturalistic observation' as

more classical ethnography commands. In certain cases while I engaged in participant observation I needed to wait for my participants to translate a conversation or an event that had just unfolded (see McBurney and White 2009; Angrosino and Rosenberg 2013, p.154).

I believe that I, to the best of my abilities, circumvented this through the utilisation of a translator, but also the adoption of mixed sampling techniques as a means to triangulate my findings. This included, as mentioned earlier, the utilisation of snowball sampling following the identification of key informants and gatekeepers as a method to lead me to 'information-rich cases' that could be used to represent 'typical case' participants relevant to my research questions. But I have to admit that there was always the risk that subtle inferences and perspectives may have been lost in translation.

Before I proceed I also need to highlight the use of social media applications in the building up of this vital network of contacts and how they further facilitated the development of the relationships made. Facebook Chat and Whatsapp were effective but the Chinese WeChat application was of notable value. As the preeminent online communication platform in China almost all Palestinian traders doing business with China were active users; generally to communicate with their suppliers but also their Palestinian counterparts. In China, some trader communities had specific WeChat 'groups' to share information and to arrange gatherings. Moreover, the free online calls function allowed me to speak to traders across time zones with comparative ease. I also found WeChat useful to send short messages, such as best wishes during, for example, Chinese New Year and Ramadan, this contributed to the sustaining of relations during the time that I was not in the field.

3.2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION: "WE SHOULD DO BUSINESS TOGETHER!"

In the early stages of my research it was important that I could understand at least the practical requirements of being a Palestinian trader. These efforts to personally 'participate' meant that overtime I often found myself questioning whether I was writing a manual on how to set up a business as a Palestinian,

including, for example, the different departments that one needed to be registered at and the various taxes that were involved.⁴ Though such a holistic approach on occasion seemingly sidetracked me from my principal research questions, looking back, I cannot overstate the importance of taking this roundabout journey. I learnt things that sadly did not find their way directly into this thesis, but equally, my final lines of enquiry were preeminently defined by trying to fully understand what was required to be a Palestinian trader -without setting up an actual business.

Indeed the more I built relations with specific traders I was increasingly approached about going into business with them, or at least was told that I should start doing some trading of my own. This was no doubt due to my privileged position of being able to travel comparatively freely to the different market places as well as to my knowledge of the (il) licit practices in which many merchants engaged in. This level of knowledge that I accumulated was also integral to both fast track my ability to build relations with traders and to focus on the issues that were relevant to my thesis as I already knew of the common challenges that most merchants faced.

This approach provided the avenue for my other methodological techniques of participant observation and at first primarily unstructured interviews that are characteristic of ethnography due to their more conversational form (see Spradley 1979). These techniques were intricately connected as my observations were often further probed in my interviews for clarification, while insights from my interviews regularly pushed me to seek supporting evidence through observation; akin to what Glaser and Strauss discuss as a process of 'theoretical sampling' whereby a researcher begins with a general view on an issue but refines what data to collect next as the theory arises (1967, p.45-78; 2004, p.227).

This points to the comparatively 'unstructured' approach of these methods as my initial point of departure was rarely to be guided by a specific set of questions or

⁴ Along the continuum of 'participation' techniques, this was neither an example of 'pure observer' nor 'pure participant', but rather a combination of 'participant as observer' and 'observer as participant' as a method to gain both insights from my participants but also personal experience of their practices (see Hesse-Biber 2017, p.194-5; Gray 2018, p.433).

enquiries, but rather to allow the field and particularly the participants to lead the way; as is common to ethnographic research (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p.3). It was only in my most recent field trip in 2019 having already written up my first draft of the empirical case studies that I intentionally refrained from engaging too extensively in new lines of study, but rather focused on confirming and reinforcing my earlier findings. At this stage my interviews could better be regarded as 'semi-structured' as though they were still open for probing I had become more rigid in the framework of my enquiry.

There were inevitably particularities of each research site which requires comment, but in general these methodologies were deployed in the shop where each trader worked so as to support 'naturalistic observation' (Angrosino and Rosenberg 2013, p.151). As I was conscious not to disrupt the business of each trader it often meant spending hours at a time waiting for a brief moment to gain an insight, that on a quiet day could turn into a lengthy conversation with a participant seeking to pass the time. The time in their shop also allowed me to observe the different customers they interacted with and the ways in which business was conducted.

This was particularly useful in the case of Barta'a as I would, when appropriate, also question the customers to understand their motivations for coming to the village and their experience of doing business with Palestinians. Otherwise, I would wherever possible seek the views of participants during the many other moments that we were together as both 'non-directive' and 'informal conversational' interviews; this included, but was not limited to, shared meals or when they drove me to my accommodation at the end of the day (see Gray 2018, p.381-2).

The inconsistencies and informalities in when research was conducted meant that rarely were interviews tape recorded, but were rather noted in my field work diary. Similarly, I did not feel it appropriate to ask participants to sign a consent form, though they were as best as possible briefed on the purpose of my research. But, though the methods discussed above were comparatively consistent throughout my research, each of my case studies presented nuances that required particular approaches and adaptations, as discussed below.

3.3. ACCESSING BARTA'A

The study of Barta'a was both the most testing and taxing case study due to the simple challenge of accessing the village. During my first visits it required almost full dependence on the support of Palestinian traders who travelled to Barta'a but resided in the West Bank, generally in or around the city of Jenin. These traders would help me to navigate the various security measures at the Reihan checkpoint, and importantly, bring me back to the West Bank at the end of the day. Over time, however, it became unviable to consistently coordinate these journeys and so I started to use public transport to get me to the village.

This meant taking a public minibus from Jenin to the Reihan checkpoint, independently navigating the security procedures, and then sharing a private vehicle onwards to the village. The journey to Barta'a could take from an hour to three hours depending on how I was treated at the checkpoint. This was mainly because it was seemingly unheard of for a British passport holder to use a 'crossing' that is scarcely known to, let alone used by, foreign visitors. As a result, I was routinely kept aside for questioning. Though following at least a dozen such experiences it became clear that the checkpoint manager was familiar with me and would inform his staff to let me through after they predictably telephoned him for advice. The return journey was always faster as the checkpoint did not monitor those who returned to the West Bank. These experiences were invaluable to have brief 'informal conversational interviews' with Palestinians on their way to Barta'a and to understand the procedures they were forced to undertake, and sadly witnessing many that were not approved to cross. But, following my first two extensive trips to study Barta'a such a use of my time became untenable.

Instead, I decided to stay on the Israeli side of the Separation Wall in the nearby towns home to Palestinian Citizens of Israel. With the support of a local contact I was able to find accommodation in Kafr Qara and Ar'ara. This did not mean that access to the village was now simple as my journey involved walking along the side of highways and waiting for scheduled buses that often did not arrive, nevertheless, I no longer needed to cross the checkpoint and was therefore able to extend the time I spent in the village. As I became acquainted with Palestinian citizens of Israel in the area I was also able to get their perspective on Barta'a.

3.4. DEALING WITH DIVERSITY IN HEBRON

As Hebron is the largest city in Palestine it was far more accessible and possible to find accommodation in the heart of the city. I routinely stayed in a hostel right next to the Bab al-Zawiya roundabout that is located by the entrance of the Old City and only a few hundred metres from the official demarcation of the city into zones H1 and H2. This meant that I was within a ten minute walk radius of the three different sites and their affiliated traders that were the focus of this empirical chapter. But, by engaging with a broader range of GFB actors it required regular adjustments to how I was able to interact with each of them.

In the case of those in H1, they always had a shop that I could visit and it was rarely necessary to consider the risk of instability due to incursions by the Israeli military or disturbances from the settlers. Whereas in the borderland of H1-H2, and particularly in H2, the conditions were far less predictable even though I never experienced any notable threat to my own safety nor that of my participants. Though I had to be more conscious of when I visited these traders as the market place would quieten down much earlier than the rest of Hebron due to the lack of customers.

The ease of communication also varied as, for example, the merchants in H2 were often more elderly and educated. As a result, it was less difficult to find traders who spoke English and as they were rarely busy they were more generous with their time. In H1 I was fortunate to find traders who also spoke good English but this area could become so popular with shoppers that it was hard to conduct interviews without committing many hours to the process. The H1-H2 borderland was the most challenging because the majority of the traders I engaged with were young men who often had minimal further education and so could not speak English. At the same time, these merchants did not have an official shop space and so I needed to stand along the street which often drew the attention of other traders who, though friendly, made it difficult for me to stay focused on my participant. I was generally unable to conduct research in the H1-H2 borderland space without the support of a translator.

It is worth noting that I originally attempted to use a survey to bypass the need to

speaking Arabic and as a tool to make broader comparisons across the different sites of enquiry in Hebron. The data could be analysed quickly and with minimal subjectivity, and arguably less susceptible to misinterpretation due to this method's rigidity (Pierce 2008, p.41). My strategy was to have survey participants expand on certain responses while the survey collection process would provide an opportunity to build rapport and to identify whether the participant had suitable English (if not, at least I had a survey response). In the end, I did carry out a survey but have chosen not to use the results. I feel that I did not design the questioning with enough rigour nor was the sample size large enough for analysis to be suitable for a doctoral level research project. Nevertheless, the findings did offer valuable indicative data that helped me to shape my lines of enquiry and, as hoped, was how I met many of my final research participants.

In conclusion to *Part One*, the principle methods I adopted were informed by my interpretivist paradigm of knowledge production - as is characteristic of a GFB study. But, as I conducted research over a range of sites it also required flexibility and mixed methods to overcome, for example, issues of language and access, that would otherwise have limited my ability to address my research questions. The key methodological consideration throughout was that a GFB approach is a process of humanising Palestinian political economy. Specifically, that globalised Palestine trade, both its scale but more importantly its social, economic and political impacts, cannot be understood by statistics or official reports, but only by unpacking the experiences of those most directly involved through a 'bottom up' perspective.

To highlight the significance of this methodology and as an insight into the inductive nature of this research project - in particular during the early stage of my research - I will now take the reader on a journey from a market town in China to the market place in Palestine; I leave the extended analysis of Palestinian market places to their respective empirical chapters. This journey will further show how I came to the position that formal trader data is comparatively redundant for this thesis. I will do this by principally, but not solely, looking at the issue of *under or non-declared* trade. Importantly, this 'journey' does not just show the value and necessity of a 'bottom up' study, but also alludes to the many examples of why it is integral to be conscious of the broader political conditions that determine

Palestinian trade, i.e. context, that is so integral to an interpretivist paradigm of research. In so doing, revealing the preeminent interdependence of the 'above' and 'below' in globalised trade as commercial practices seamlessly interweave between the legal/illegal and licit/illicit. An awareness of such phenomenon is integral to the broader research questions that this thesis will explore. This journey begins, at the Chinese market city of Yiwu.

PART TWO: THE JOURNEY

SECTION FOUR: YIWU - THE SOURCE

“you cannot research this, you will never know the number. It is impossible to know”: As I heard these words amongst a group of Palestinian traders in the Chinese market city of Yiwu it became abundantly clear that a study of China-Palestine trade could not be a study based on official 'numbers' (Field notes, Yiwu, June 2018). Over the course of my time in Yiwu, by simply following the basic procedures of doing business in China it was apparent that before even stepping foot in Palestine the true value of trade was already lost in a web of tampered order forms, falsified commercial invoices or the blind eye of customs officials. While numerous “under the table” (Ibid.) tactics such as backhanded payments or various shipping container packing techniques to evade proper inspection, highlighted the hidden trade of illegal products that are sourced in abundance in China – in particular from cities such as Yiwu.

Yiwu, a city of 2.25 million people, is today synonymous with Chinese international trade, and specifically, its export sector.⁵ Yiwu's International Trade Centre (ITC), also known as the China Commodity City (CCC) or the Futian Market, in particular, is where traders convene from all corners of the world to source that which is 'Made in China'. Open year around, it covers 5.5 million square metres and is home to over 75,000 stalls that vend over 1.8 million types of products. It is the preeminent contributor to Yiwu's designation as the 'world's

⁵ The city is a mainstay throughout GFB literature, regularly cited as an integral source of goods in, for example, the market places of Africa (Carrier 2016; Cisse 2015), the Middle East (Pliez 2012; Simpfendorfer 2011), and Russia and Central Asia (Marsden 2016c).

largest wholesale small commodities market' where Palestinian traders are offered a unique entry point to small scale transnational trade. Unlike the challenges and financial commitment of sourcing from factories directly, Yiwu is like a large "supermarket" where traders can just as easily make a handful of small purchases that they carry back to their home country in their own luggage, or invest in a container of multiple products (Field notes, Yiwu, June 2017). In 2013, an estimated 438,000 foreign traders visited Yiwu with three quarters of commercial transactions conducted in the ITC (Pliez 2012, p. 28); for a transactional value of 85.7 billion Yuan in 2014 (Li et al. 2016, p.9-10). Yiwu's contribution towards China's export sector was approximately \$23.7 billion Yuan in 2014, from 2000 to 2014 its GDP grew sevenfold (Ibid. 9-10).

Yiwu's rapid transformation in recent decades is a testament to its key role in China's economic development. This has brought heightened international recognition and with that greater scrutiny over the business practices prevalent in the city. There is now more emphasis on both Chinese and foreign traders having the necessary licenses and paying the correct taxes. The city now hosts a far more comprehensive network of more regulated trade facilitation services including customs clearance, banking and logistics (Cisse 2015, p.48). China in general, and cities such as Yiwu in particular, have made strides in cracking down on the infringement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and the proliferation of counterfeit goods. But, the reality is Yiwu would struggle to sustain itself if it did not offer the type of flexibility that transnational traders in general, and those from Palestine in particular, rely upon. The various standout economic indicators the city boasts are its nod to the 'formal' economy, but it masks a parallel system that is omnipresent across much of China's export sector. Such practices are quite plain to see and denial is rare as they are accepted business practices across most of China, not just Yiwu. This issue was most stark when a former Chinese customs official said to me:

There is no way of knowing the value of what China exports, especially from cities like Yiwu! All official statistics mean nothing! (Shanghai, June 2017).

It is beyond this chapter to scrutinise every facet of doing business in Yiwu that contribute towards the under or non-declaration of trade as “there are many combinations” (Field notes, Shanghai, June 2019). But it is mainly a matter of loosely governed paper trails dependent on flexible and willing participants who are happy to take formal procedures of the ‘above’ into that of the informal world of the ‘below’.



Figure 1 An aisle of vendors at the ITC

This process commences right from the point of purchase at the ITC as few of the transactions are recorded by official invoices. This is aided by the fact that the Chinese vendors either pay no tax, or a standardised, and very low, monthly tax rate, so there is little reason to formally register their commerce for the purposes of submitting data to the local governing authorities. This is further complicated as though vendors in the market might be, for example, a small family run wholesalers or a factory outlet, in general, they only accept payment to their personal, and not company, bank accounts – a procedure that does not entail formal registration of the transaction (Field notes, Yiwu, June 2017). Some visiting traders might simply pay them in cash. And so, even at this earliest stage in China-Palestine commerce, the Chinese government seems neither concerned nor fully capable of monitoring just how much business each vendor is doing. But instead, facilitates a practice of informal commerce that allows its traders to maximise profits from both domestic, but particularly, international trade.

It is, however, not at this stage that the issue of under or non-declaration of China-Palestine trade occurs, as officially, Palestinian traders are not sourcing from these suppliers. This is because the majority of vendors in the market do not hold an export license, and so cannot provide the necessary documentation or payment facilitation necessary for exporting goods.⁶ Such a license requires additional registration, regulation and tax liabilities that these vendors prefer not to engage in. A Palestinian trader must then seek the services of a, commonly termed, import-export agent, in order to formerly process their goods through Chinese ports and onwards to Palestine. The import-export agent will accumulate all the different purchases undertaken by a trader at the ITC and register them as one transaction, under their company name as if they were the sole supplier; as a result, at no point thereafter in the export documentation is there a record of any transactions between the Palestinian trader and the various Futian Market suppliers. As the trader's business dealing with the import-export agent is the formal record of commerce for the purpose of exporting, it is at this stage where official China-Palestine trade data begins to lose credibility.

The desire to under or non-declare must be matched by an ability to manipulate the shipping documents, and specifically the commercial invoice, that is produced by the import-export agent. Fortunately, for traders visiting Yiwu, the commercial invoice is entirely flexible to their needs. Quite simply, the Chinese import-export agent will put down whatever value a trader requests for the documentation that will be provided to the Israeli customs authorities who will first process Palestinian imports. Alternatively, Palestinian agents in Yiwu who facilitate the visiting merchants, including liaising with the import-export agent, routinely told me that

The import-export agent will often just send us their company branded excel spreadsheet and let us fill it out! (Trader interview, Yiwu, June 2017).

As a result, traders in Palestine often showed me copies of commercial invoices that they presented to Israeli customs that could be as low as 20-30% of the real value of the goods (Field notes, Ramallah, Oct. 2017); trade agents in Yiwu confirmed similar rates of undervaluation.

⁶ Such as receiving USD transfers from foreign merchants.

This is possible because it ultimately makes little difference to the import-export agent or Chinese customs. As there are almost no export taxes in China - particularly for the type of goods Palestinians are sourcing from Yiwu- it is generally irrelevant as to what quantity or cost the goods are declared. A former Chinese customs official told me in no uncertain terms that

China does not care about its exports. It cares about imports but it does not care about exports! Yes, it is making some efforts to check that it doesn't export unlicensed goods but in general it wants to get rid of as much as it can! This is how China makes it's money! If China stopped this it would be a disaster! (Interview, Shanghai, June 2017).

A Palestinian merchants indifference to what their import-export agent declares in China is reflective of one of the most notable challenges when exploring global trade data. Specifically, the absence of transparent and reliable data sharing between customs authorities means that the commercial invoice provided by the import-export agent to the port in China, does not need to match the one presented once the goods have arrived at the port of destination (Field notes, Shanghai, May 2019). For China-Israel and China-Palestine trade relations, even though in both cases there are ongoing discussions related to potential Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), there is still no formal relationship between each sides customs authorities to effectively regulate and monitor issues related to the under or non-declaration of trade in general, and irregular shipping documents in particular (Mr. Al-Deek, Ramallah, Sept. 2017).

The result of such disparities is, partly, evident by looking at China-Palestine 'mirror trade' data. That is, the value of Chinese 'exports' to Palestine found in the Chinese National Statistics Yearbook, vis-à-vis Palestinian 'imports' from China as presented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. In the case of 2016, Palestinian 'imports' from China were almost 650% higher than the value of Chinese 'exports' to Palestine: over \$382.7 million compared to \$59.3 million. Such variances are particularly startling when comparing China-Israel and China-Palestine 'mirror trade' over the 2007-16 period: in the former, Chinese 'exports' to Israel were on average 24% lower than the reported Israeli 'imports' from China, while Chinese 'exports' to Palestine were a staggering 83% less than

Palestinian 'imports' from China'.⁷ These sizeable differences are significant because it is generally accepted by international reporting institutions that a reasonable range is approximately 10% (UN Comtrade).⁸

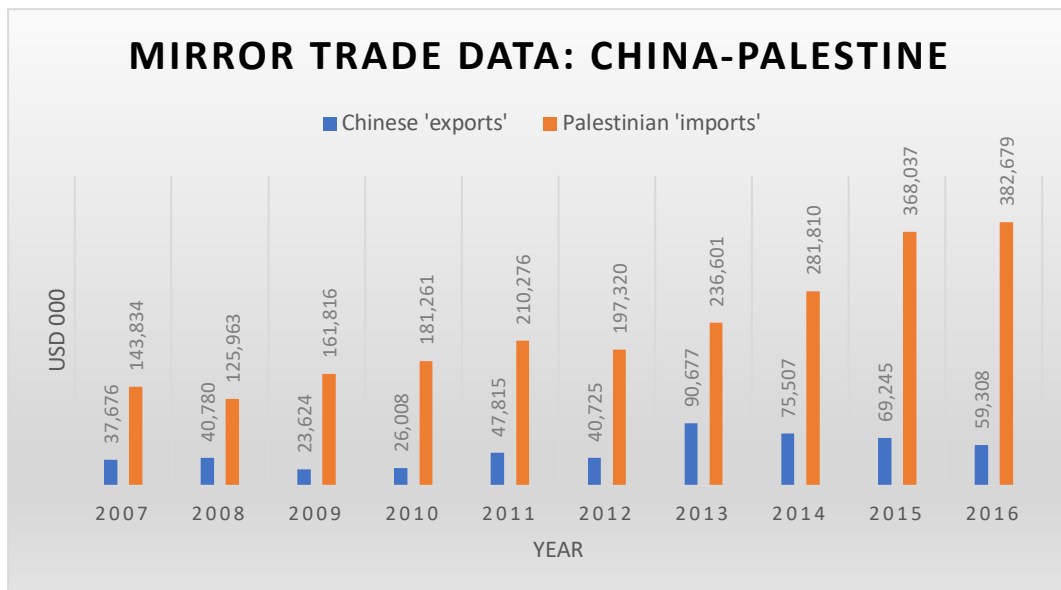


Figure 2 Graph showing the disparity in China-Palestine mirror trade

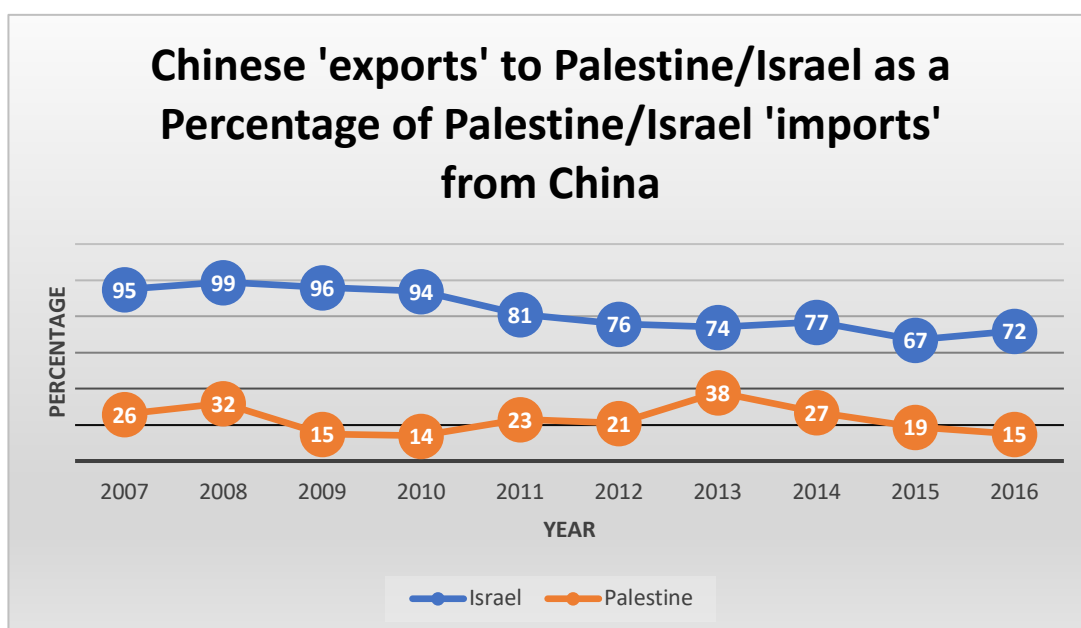


Figure 3 Graph showing the difference between China-Palestine and China-Israel mirror trade

⁷ Personal calculations based on UN Comtrade data.

⁸ These figures highlight a particular experience when considering Chinese imports, as in a 2016 World Bank report it was estimated that on average Palestinian imports from third countries were undervalued by 32%. In the same study, Israel's rate of undervaluation with third countries was 23%. Note potential discrepancies between how the World Bank and I have calculated 'mirror trade' data (including for Figure 3).

Though a generally heightened propensity for Palestinian traders to under or non-declare their trade is regularly attributed to these disparities, it is also indicative of a particular experience faced by Palestinian importers vis-à-vis Israeli traders as both have their imports processed at the same Israeli ports of entry and should, officially, be subject to the same levels of scrutiny. This then requires a consideration of the Israeli ports where all Palestinian imports first arrive. In so doing, I will highlight the challenges faced by Palestinian traders, but also how such conditions further embolden traders to provide false data. The result is not just undervalued China-Palestine trade, but also the proliferation of ‘indirect’ commerce through Israel, leading to Palestinian imports from China being accounted as China-Israel and subsequently Israel-Palestine transactions. In each case further skewing China-Palestine trade data before goods have even reached the oPt.

SECTION FIVE: THE ISRAELI PORT

“they hate to see the word Palestine”: These were the words of Mohamad, a Palestinian trade agent, as he showed me a collection of shipping documents for Palestine bound containers in his downtown office in Yiwu (Field notes, May 2019). On almost every document it identified the Palestinian city where it was destined, e.g. Jenin, but only had Israel not Palestine as the destination. What Mohammad showed me was a key piece of a puzzle that had for a long time evaded me in my pursuit to explain the sizeable variations in China-Palestine ‘mirror trade’ data -i.e. far in excess of the commonly accepted 10% disparity mentioned earlier. By adopting Mohamad’s technique it meant that at Chinese ports Palestinian bound containers would be documented as ‘exports’ to Israel, and once the containers arrived in Israel they would be re-registered as Palestinian ‘imports’ by the Israeli authorities who were able to recognise the real destination through the trader’s Palestinian VAT number. This phenomenon helped to explain why China’s ‘exports’ to Palestine were so much lower than Palestinian ‘imports’ from China. While China’s exports to Israel were inflated as they included goods that would later not be recorded as Israeli imports from China. This showed that disparities in China-Palestine ‘mirror trade’ were not just a matter of the under or non-declaration of goods, but also the intentional mislabeling of shipping documents.



**COPY NON-NEGOTIABLE
BILL OF LADING**

Shipper [REDACTED] TRADING COMPANY LIMITED [REDACTED] ONE CAPITAL PLACE 18 LUARD ROAD WAN CHAI HK*		Booking No. M23238	B/L No. YMS123456789
Consignee WAEL [REDACTED] ADD: ISRAEL-ASHDOD-JENIN VAT: 9368 [REDACTED] TEL/FAX: 04243 [REDACTED]		Export References	
Notify Party SAME AS CONSIGNEE		Forwarding agent references	
*Prepared by		Point and Country of Origin of goods ALSO NOTIFY	
*Place of Receipt NINGBO		Onward inland routing	
Vessel Voy No. 022W flag YM WINNER	Port of Loading NINGBO		Delivery status
Port of Discharge ASHDOD	*Place of Delivery ASHDOD		
PARTICULARS FURNISHED BY MERCHANT			
MKS & NOS/CONTAINER NOS	NO OF PKGS	DESCRIPTION OF PACKAGES AND GOODS	Weight and Vol
1 CTND	1 CTND	SHIPPED TO ISRAEL AND POINT	GR. 000 CBM

Figure 4 Copy of a bill of lading for a Palestine bound container labelled as destined for Israel

I was informed that this practice was, in part, motivated by the rationale that it was simply easier for Chinese customs to correlate the allocated port in Israel (e.g. Ashdod) with the destination country of Israel. It was considered more practical to simply omit the word ‘Palestine’ so as to avoid confusion. This arrangement is the byproduct of the absence of any operational Palestinian ports of entry (airport or seaport) nor control over land crossings, resulting in all Palestinian trade initially being processed and recorded by the Israeli authorities. But also, because merchants will actively ask not to put down Palestine in the hope that their container will not be flagged by the Israeli customs authorities. Palestinian traders and their agents in China regularly cited their motivation was, like the words of Mohamad, because “they hate to see the word Palestine” (Ibid.). These Palestinian traders shared stories of when they were in Israel or were with Israeli’s who reluctantly used the word Palestine, or at worse, claimed that Palestine did not exist (Field notes, Yiwu, May 2019). The belief was that this attitude overflowed into the trading world, whereby even though the Israeli authorities were able to identify a shipment’s Palestinian destination through the VAT number, it was preferable not to put the word Palestine to avoid heightened scrutiny at Israeli ports:

One time my customer put everything, like Hebron, West Bank, Palestine. But after this he told me never to do it again. I think he faced many problems at Ashdod (port in Israel). My buyers tell me never to put Palestine. I don’t think I ever put Palestine! (Mohamad, May 2019).

Such a decision is, however, not driven purely by sentiment but also by extensive and tangible experience. As though Palestinian and Israeli trade should be subject to the same levels of scrutiny by Israeli customs -as supposedly enshrined in the PER that formally governs this arrangement- the reality is notably different. A range of studies confirm that both the formal and informal procedures that dictate the evaluation of Palestinian containers result in a Palestinian trader facing more challenges at the port than an Israeli importer. A World Bank report estimated that a Palestinian container might take four times as long to clear and three times the transaction cost compared to Israeli goods (2016, p.6).

The import and export of the Palestinians through the points of exit and entry in Israel will be given equal trade and economic treatment. (Protocol on Economic Relations, Article III (13).

In general, the delays are attributed to the need for Palestinian trade to face more 'security' checks that can result in a range of additional costs – in time and money (World Bank 2017, p.6). As a result, I just showed that Palestinian agents in China will often omit 'Palestine' from shipping documents to avoid scrutiny at Israeli ports, but of further impact is how the heightened focus on 'security' and the affiliated challenges encourage two additional practices undertaken by Palestinian traders: sourcing their goods directly from the Israeli market or using Israeli merchants to import their containers on their behalf. In both cases contributing towards 'indirect' commerce, with China-Palestine trade incorrectly attributed to China-Israel and Palestine-Israel trade figures.

5.1. CHINA-PALESTINE TRADE AS CHINA-ISRAEL OR PALESTINE-ISRAEL TRADE

“the Palestinians were there to be cheated!” (Israeli customs broker, Ashdod, Oct 2017): Under heightened levels of 'security' a Palestinian container is likely to amass a range of additional costs before it is cleared; for example, further customs inspections and testing, and extended storage periods that can lead to an additional \$538 per shipment compared to an Israeli container (World Bank 2017, p.6). Some estimate that only 5% of containers in the world undergo proper examinations at ports, but such a statistic scarcely seems to apply to Palestinian

imports (Nordstrom 2007, p.118). As one Palestinian customs broker responded to me when I presented this figure:

It's so difficult to clear our goods. Because we go to security checks. They want to see the goods by eye. For Israeli 90% cleared without anybody seeing the goods. For Palestinians, maybe not 5% checked but 95%! (Palestinian Customs Broker, Ramallah, Oct. 2017).

This results in a Palestinian import file often being far more profitable to an Israeli clearance agency than an Israeli container, and therefore presents a financial incentive in addition to a 'security' rationale for delaying Palestinian containers (Peres Centre for Peace 2017).⁹ Simultaneously, as the majority of Palestinian traders cannot access the port this has also historically allowed for them to be taken advantage of. For example, even when their container was cleared by customs the Israeli clearance agent who Palestinian traders are forced to use - either directly or indirectly through a Palestinian customs broker- might have stated otherwise, and fabricated additional fees that the trader was forced to pay before receiving their goods (Field notes, Ashdod, Oct. 2017).¹⁰ More recently, comparatively unregulated Palestinian customs brokers have also been thought responsible -sometimes in collusion with Israeli partners- for such practices (Ibid.).

The heightened cost, in both time and finance, means that it is often simply faster and cheaper to buy from the Israeli market than to face the formal and informal procedures related to importing to Palestine. This is also influenced by factors such as restrictions on Palestinians importing certain goods, such as 'dual use' items, even though they are often allowed to purchase them from the Israeli market (Field notes, Yiwu, June 2017; see also World Bank 2019a). Many Israeli companies have also obtained the sole distribution licence of an imported product which forces Palestinians to buy through them as Palestinian merchants are

⁹ A report by the Israeli Peres Centre for Peace (2017) highlighted that Israeli clearance agencies received up to 50% commission from private port storage companies – thus encouraging delays.

¹⁰ Arguably, such practices are less common today as traders have become more experienced and it is easier to monitor the clearance of a shipment online without going to the port.

unable to source directly from the overseas supplier – often internationally recognised brands (Field notes, Ramallah, June 2018). This is particularly contentious as an Israeli distribution license should not automatically include the oPt, but often, Israeli merchants will have this included in the terms of their agreement, or the supplier might themselves not recognise the oPt as an independent market:

I took my client to the Canton Fair (Guangzhou, China) and they wanted to import some kitchen supplies. But once they said it was to Palestine the Chinese trader said he had to ask the Israeli agent! (Trader, Yiwu, June 2017).

Alternatively, the difficulties in clearing goods at the port encourages Palestinians to ask Israeli merchants and middlemen to import on their behalf so that goods are treated as Israel bound products. Once the goods have been cleared the Israeli will then 're-sell' the good to the Palestinian. In each of the scenarios mentioned, the initial importation of goods will be classified as Israeli trade with China and will, thereafter, be lost in the calculations of 'indirect' imports to the oPt, where they are actually destined.

This phenomenon is problematic because it results in notable 'tax leakage' as the clearance revenues on these goods will be accrued by the Israeli treasury: in 2014 it was calculated that such 'tax leakages' amassed to \$30.6 million based on an estimated \$726 million of indirect trade (World Bank 2016, p.15). But from an official Palestinian trade statistic perspective it completely skews the data in terms of with whom Palestine is actually trading. In 2014 it was estimated that 35% of Palestinian imports from Israel were from third countries (excluding water, electricity and fuel) (Ibid.; see also UNCTAD 2004; 2011; Elkhafif et al. 2014). This revelation redefines the extent to which the Palestinian economy has, to date, appeared overwhelmingly dependent on Israeli goods, but also, it raises the question of where these 'indirect' imports actually come from. For example, how many millions of Chinese imports to Palestine are registered as China-Israel trade? Instead, these goods will only appear in Palestinian trade statistics as Israeli exports to Palestine. And as the 'unified invoices' used to document Israeli exports to Palestine -which are also subject to high levels of non-declaration- do

not formerly require stating the origin of the goods it means that it is almost impossible to identify the value or original source of 'indirect' exports to Palestine.

But, though the proliferation of 'indirect' trade has increasingly been identified as a leading contributor to inaccurate Palestinian trade figures, it is also important to briefly consider how the prioritisation on 'security' above the financial 're-evaluation' of Palestine bound containers also emboldens traders to under or non-declare the value of their trade; in so doing, further undermining the validity of China-Palestine trade data.

SECTION SIX: SECURITY FIRST, RE-EVALUATION LATER

The prioritisation on 'security' regularly results in the delay of Palestinian containers, but rarely in their financial 're-evaluation' to address issues of under or non-declared of trade (Mr. Al-Deek, Ramallah, April 2019). This is common practice at both Israeli ports of entry, but also at Israeli controlled checkpoints into the oPt that are predominantly managed by the Israeli military who are neither trained nor motivated to challenge falsified customs valuations (see Natsheh and Parizot 2015). Simultaneously, as Palestinian importers must sign a formal declaration that they will not re-sell their imported goods back into Israel, at least formerly, Israel can be less concerned by undervalued Palestinian goods entering their market and undercutting Israeli vendors (World Bank 2016, p.14). Under such conditions, Palestinian traders are better able to provide false data without being challenged by the Israeli authorities. Before expanding upon this, it is first important to consider Israel's propensity not to re-evaluate Palestinian imports as a practice, arguably, informed not solely by issues of 'security', but also politics.

This phenomenon derives from Israel's dominant position as the collector and disburser of the various import taxes and fees owed to the PA from its international trade. As such clearance revenues constituted around 66% of PA revenues in 2017, any disturbance to the transfer of these funds have a notable effect on Palestinian economic development (Arafah 2018, p.3). It is, therefore, argued, that an inclination not to re-evaluate Palestinian imports is also tied to a motivation to mitigate the potential revenues that the PA can generate from its trade sector. Specifically, though it is in the interest of a regularly functioning

customs authority to appropriately evaluate imports to ensure the correct clearance taxes are raised, in the case of Palestinian imports it is of less concern to the Israeli customs authorities who, though receive a sizeable administrative fee, do not fully benefit from such re-evaluations.¹¹ Many Palestinian traders identify this practice as an opportunity to avoid scrutiny in relation to their (under) declared value of trade:

Israel don't need the Palestinian trade or economy to grow, so they accept undervalued invoices (Palestinian agent, Yiwu, June 2017).

This issue is compounded as it is, instead, predominantly left to the ill-equipped Palestinian customs authority to attempt to recapture the loss revenues from under or non-declared trade. But, as Palestinian customs are unable to access Israeli ports of entry to enact their authority, they must wait until Israeli customs notify them that the container has been released, at which point, it has often already passed into the oPt and been sold or disseminated (Mr. Al-Deek, Ramallah, June 2017). Moreover, with the PA's restricted access throughout the oPt and the many unregulated passageways into the area, it is simply impossible to monitor a significant amount of the containers that enter the oPt (Garb 2015). For example, many traders first send their containers directly to Area B and C in the oPt where the PA has either no administrative or security authority, before transferring their goods onwards to Area A where they are sold (Mr. Al-Deek, Ramallah, Sept. 2017; see also Natsheh and Parizot 2015, p.112-21). A Palestinian trader can, therefore, navigate these various administrative regimes from the Israeli ports of entry through to the oPt market place in a manner that limits any effective oversight from the perspective of accurate trade valuations.

This then alludes to a final issue in relation to the inaccuracy of trade figures as presented by Palestinian institutions. That is, that Palestinian customs not only depend almost fully on the services of Israeli customs, but Palestinian trade statistics are invariably dictated by what the Israeli authorities declare to them.

¹¹Israel receives a 3% administrative fee that was worth 64 millions NIS in 2014, covering over a third of the budget of the Israeli customs and VAT department, even though Palestinian trade constitutes just 6% of their work (World Bank 2016, p.20).

This is, however, further challenged by inconsistencies and inadequacies in data sharing. For example, until 2009, only at the end of each month would Palestinian customs receive an e-mail with the value of clearance revenues they would be transferred and a paper document with the customs declaration details of all goods formerly destined for Palestine (Mr. Al-Deek, Ramallah, May 2019; see also USAID 2008, p.11-12). Therefore, at no stage before this were they knowledgeable of what was being imported, let alone in a position to challenge the customs declarations.

Astonishingly, this was actually an improvement on the mechanism in the years immediately post-PER. During this time the Palestinian customs authority would simply receive a hard copy document at the end of each month with details of the various import duties that they would be transferred; but no information about the Palestinian trader nor the goods that they imported (Mr. Al-Deek, Ramallah, May 2019). Unsurprisingly, traders considered this part of the “golden ages” as they felt comparatively carefree in the values they declared (Palestinian customs broker, Ramallah, Oct. 2017). The extent to which Chinese imports to Palestine were undervalued during this period and skewed overall trade statistics is unquestionably significant. Since only 2014 have Palestinian customs received data on a daily basis (importantly, not live) and have been able to adopt more advanced online data sharing systems (World Bank 2016, p.15). As Palestinian customs officials are, essentially, always playing catch up in the monitoring of trade, Palestinian merchants are able to exploit such inadequacies by registering falsified levels of trade that can regularly go unchallenged.

And so, having built upon the business practices found in Yiwu, the particular conditions that govern Palestinian trade upon their arrival in the ports of entry in Israel also show that China-Palestine trade data has limited credibility before goods have even reached the oPt. How this continues to unfold in various oPt market places is addressed in more detail throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis. Though the most basic knock on effect from the perspective of official figures is the need to stay consistent with the falsified trade declarations. That is, if a trader, for example, has imported \$10,000 in goods but declared \$2000, their submitted sales report will align to \$2000 (Field notes, Jenin, May 2018). These are but some of the many phenomenon that render void a study of globalised

Palestinian trade based purely on 'numbers', while importantly, alluding to more questions about Palestine's particular economic and political conditions that this thesis is now positioned to explore, as discussed in the closing remarks below.

SECTION SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The 'journey' just outlined was the product of multiple overseas visits to China, Palestine and Israel over the course of four years. What began as a broad exploration of China-Palestine trade through the adoption of an inductive 'bottom up' methodology came to highlight the importance and impact of the different sites that govern such commerce, and particularly how they have all contributed towards the under or non-declaration of trade. The findings were a result of an interpretivist paradigm of research involving extensive participant observation and generally unstructured interviews as I sought to piece together both the practicalities, but also the day to day challenges of those engaged in this commerce. Yet, what appeared to be a relentless pursuit to validate the need not to rely on formal trade data, was also an important point of departure to expand an enquiry into globalised Palestinian trade – importantly, not just China-Palestine commerce. This 'journey', therefore, raised far more questions than simply issues of unreliable statistics, as noted below:

The interdependence of the different sites highlighted not just the 'globalised' nature of this trade, but also the varied levels of how the formal and informal, or worlds of 'above' and 'below', interweave on multiple occasions across numerous geographical locations. Indeed, rarely was the pursuit of conducting business in one way completely at the cost of the other, rather, one form was often dependent on the other. This included, for example, the use of legally registered import-export agents in Yiwu to formally document otherwise unregistered and informal trade. This meant that such 'illegal' commerce were still embedded in the official trade figures as accumulated by the agencies of the 'above' – even if at highly undervalued levels. Similarly, the actors of the 'above' and 'below' were regularly complicit and collaborative agents in achieving globalised trade. Such as the role of Israeli traders and customs agents that must be employed to facilitate the 'indirect' trade of imported goods into the oPt on behalf of Palestinian merchants. Simultaneously, the preceding analysis alluded to some particular experiences

faced by Palestinians, and therefore begins to ask what is the appropriate contextual paradigm to explore globalised Palestinian trade. This chapter showed how the mere use of the word Palestine can have notable implications on how a trader's shipment will be handled. While the PA's inability to, for example, access Israeli ports or govern the passageways and spaces that goods transit into and throughout the oPt, show its lack of sovereignty in economic affairs. It is, therefore, integral to consider how the 'above' should be framed not just from the perspective of economic globalisation, but the political conditions that define this commerce. In the case of omitting the word Palestine from shipping documents - informed by a practice to seemingly eliminate the word Palestine while invalidating its economic, and by virtue political identity- and so forcing traders, and global trade more broadly, to work only through Israel, I contend presents a preliminary insight into Palestinian trade when the 'above' is a settler colonial structure.

These observations call upon both a more in-depth understanding of how scholarship defines what is meant by 'above' and 'below', and also an exploration of what can be learnt from other studies about the varied role of the agents that operate in these spaces, particularly those from the 'below'. Of further importance is the need for a prism to explain how illegal/legal and licit/illicit practices are regularly able to overlap, as seen throughout the 'journey'. This is particularly relevant when considering the varied formal stipulations of illegal/legal and informal interpretations of licit/illicit that are experienced as a Chinese good passes from China, through Israel, and finally to Palestine in a context where the 'below' is governed at every level by a settler colonial 'above'.

The undertaking of the 'journey' was, therefore, key to opening up the lines of enquiry that this thesis was subsequently concerned with, while validating a methodology that could be used to unpack not just the how and why traders did what they did, but also the implications of their varied social, economic and political trajectories thereafter on the broader challenge of Israeli settler colonialism; issues that are paramount to this thesis' latter empirical analysis, and vital in an interpretivist study that attaches importance to 'context' and 'meaning' behind an individual's actions.

This was the methodological foundation upon which this thesis became not just about formal data or under or non-declared trade. To not have shared this with the reader would have discredited what was an integral part of my research journey and why it belongs in this methodology chapter. The next step before proceeding to the empirical chapters of this thesis is then to look to literature to provide the tools to further explore and critique the observations just noted. This means contextualising the concept of 'globalisation from below' and the logic of 'settler colonialism', in the latter case focusing particularly on two facets that I believe have pre-eminently contributed towards the rise and proliferation of Palestinian GFB, 'de-development' and 'deterritorialisation'.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, few terms have received as much attention as globalisation. A word regularly deemed 'overused', 'misused', and 'abused', is trumpeted by globalists as a "real and significant historical development", but increasingly challenged by skeptics -in particular in a post-9/11 era- as a principally "ideological or mythical construction which has marginal explanatory value" (Held and McGrew 2002, p.3). It has, nevertheless, become a bedrock to our understanding and critiquing of modern day social, political and economic realities - the world over. At its core, it is characterised by the notion of a 'shrinking world' in which global interconnectivity, integration and interdependence is the norm. The increasing speeds and ease at which people, commodities and finance can traverse time zones and borders has challenged the "friction imposed by distance on social interaction", while fostering economic ties and cultural exchanges across communities that would previously have had limited engagement (Leyshon 1995, p.12). This phenomenon of 'time-space' compression is grounded in advances in technology, communication and transport, most notably over the last seventy years (see Janelle 1969; Harvey 1990; Giddens 1991).

This fusion of local, regional and international economies has fostered a global trading ecosystem of an unparalleled scale. Though global trade has experienced drastic periodic disruptions and is indeed still in a process of recovery following the 2008 global financial crisis, world merchandise trade equated to \$19.67 trillion in 2018 compared to \$3.5 trillion in 1990 (WTO 2019, p.8).¹² China presents the pinnacle of this phenomenon; now the second largest economy in the world it exported almost \$2.5 trillion in 2018 from under \$22 billion in 1995 (UN Comtrade figures). It is not just developed economies that have reported sizeable changes: in 2018 the developing world constituted about 44% of global exports from about 30% in 2000 (WTO 2017, p.60; 2019, p.14). While since 2011 'South-South' trade has represented over 50% of the exports of developing countries (WTO 2019,

¹² Other notable disruptions included the 1973 oil crisis, the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, and the 2001 September 11th attacks.

p.13). Importantly, these are official statistics and disguise true values which -as this thesis presents- are certainly far higher.

This interconnectivity has, however, increasingly been met with skepticism. Many cite the growing constraint and incapacity of states to protect themselves from the reverberations of economic, political and social crises in other part of the world; to some it symbolises the potential end of the nation state (Ohmae 1993; 1995; Strange 1995). For example, in 2009 global trade fell by over 12% as both 'developed' and 'developing' economies suffered the effects of, amongst others, plummeting oil prices, non-fuel commodity price drops and slumping global manufacturing output (Ravenhill 2014, p.4). The interdependence brought forth by 'global supply chains' a key factor in the rapid dispersion of the economic crisis across the world (Thun 1994).

The influence of individual countries upon the fate of others is exemplified by the case of China and the somewhat provocative statement: "if China sneezes the world catches a cold". For each of the positive repercussions of globalisation it is increasingly possible to explore the negative. Many scholars highlight the unequal and inequitable access to the benefits of globalisation and stress that though much of the world is now 'closer', there are still many places -particularly in Africa- which are as removed from the map as ever (Allen and Hamnett 1995; Edelman and Haugerud 2005). Indeed, while globalisation has enriched many multinationals and entrepreneurs it has also come at a time of record levels of global and intra-national inequality -in both the developed and developing world- with, as stated by Colliers, a 'bottom billion' trapped in poverty (2007).

In response, politicians, economists and scholars have become aware of the need for more nuanced and ground level or 'bottom up' interpretations of globalisation. As the predominant focus on the 'macro' level processes has drawn attention away from the 'local' perspective in favour of the 'global', and specifically discounted the importance of everyday human agency in mediating globalisation (Inda and Rosaldo 2008, p.7). It is also progressively accepted that as globalisation and its impacts often do not fit comfortably into classical economic or political theories it calls upon academic approaches that themselves are grounded in a consensus that the study of people cannot be confined to social

laws and universals - regionally let alone globally (Carrier 2012, p.3). Consequently, the field of anthropology and its utilisation of data rich ethnographic techniques has sought to fill the void and shed light on lesser seen and appreciated processes of globalisation.

This has been a challenge to anthropologists who have traditionally rooted their studies in single locations and on specific, often 'indigenous' people (Lewellen 2002). In a globalised world these actors now increasingly traverse multiple sites causing methodological challenges to anthropologists who must now unpack the local, regional and global ramifications of the flow of people, ideas and commodities (Eriksen 2003). Anthropologists have also had to move away from a predominantly 'culture' centred analysis of globalisation (Lewellen 2002, p.8), but rather are increasingly called upon to engage with the economic and political dimensions of globalisation and how they shape the 'micro' level experiences of society (Edelman and Haugerud 2005).

The field of anthropology has offered much since it entered the globalisation debate. Edited compilations such as Ina and Rosaldo (2008) shed light on case studies from across the world and engaged in issues related to the effects of transnational capital, global mass media and migration, to name a few. But of interest to this thesis is the anthropological perspective on global trade and the need to pursue a multi-leveled appreciation of the associated actors and processes. The intended focus is less on the agents and actions at the 'macro' perspective of globalisation, but rather the multiple facets of globalisation that take place within the cracks of official narratives and figures as presented by, amongst others, national governments, international institutions and the 'formal' sector. All while not discounting the often intricate overlapping between these two worlds.

This requires a geographical shift in our attention away from western centric literature on the role of 'global cities' such as New York, London and Tokyo, but instead towards market towns and cities in the global South (Choplin and Pliez 2015). Sassen contended that global cities adopted new strategic roles and influence in the "spatially dispersed, yet globally integrated organisation of economic activity" characteristic of the late 20th and now 21st Century (p.2001,

p.3). But today, new studies on, for example, the Chinese city of Yiwu; container markets in states of the former Soviet Union; thriving commercial neighborhoods in Africa; and transfrontier spaces in South America have emerged, amongst other sites, as key hubs of low-end economic exchange (Humphreys and Skvirskaja 2009; Rabossi 2012; Belguidoum and Pliez 2015; Carrier 2016; Spector 2017; Marsden and Skvirskaja 2018; Rui 2018).

It also necessitates a new approach towards the study of 'global commodity chains', one that considers not just the technological and economic operations facet of production and distribution but also how it shapes the lives of the actors involved; by so doing it gives life to the 'social fabric' of human agents as well as the 'material fabric' necessary for the production of goods (Knowles 2014, p.3). Following these trade routes or "trails" unveils not just the passage of goods from the source of production in the global South to their consumption in the global North, but also the growing importance of South-South migration and trade (Knowles 2014; Rivoli 2015; Barndt 2008). Most importantly, it means turning our gaze to a less acknowledged economic class of grassroots transnational traders that skirt the line of legal/illegal and licit/illicit in their daily practices.

I refer to a fundamental but often overlooked strand of globalisation termed 'globalisation from below' (GFB), a world that can both defy and compliment the conventional principles and practices of 'globalisation', it is best encapsulated in the description below:

Globalisation as experienced by most of the world's people. It can be defined as the transnational flow of people and goods involving relatively small amounts of capital and informal, often semi-legal or illegal transactions, often associated with "the developing world" but in fact apparent across the globe (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012, p.1).

This literature review will examine GFB so as to build an intellectual context and conceptual apparatus appropriate for answering this thesis's research questions. *Section One* introduces the notion of 'globalisation from above' (GFA) as an entry point to a study of 'globalisation from below (GFB)'. *Section Two* comments on the scholarly roots of GFB and its overlap with the informal economy. *Section*

Three challenges GFB's various misconceptions and provides the relevant framework to interpret issues of legality and licitness found in cases of GFB. *Section Four* explores the agents of GFB and contests the notion that they are principally economic actors operating in an unstructured environment. *Section Five* highlights the both contradictory and complimentary interdependence of GFA and GFB. *Section Six* is the conclusion and stresses why a study of Palestinian GFB must be further contextualised through an understanding of settler colonialism, the focus of *Chapter Four*.

SECTION ONE: HEGEMONIC GLOBALISATION AND THE CASE OF 'GLOBALISATION FROM ABOVE'

To contextualise GFB one must first recognise that it does not exist in isolation and that it should be located within the broader realm of globalisation in its entirety. This includes acknowledging GFB's parallel –though not fully disconnected- world, that of 'globalisation from above' (GFA). But also, how both GFA and GFB each belong to an even broader and more sophisticated 'hegemonic world system' and 'non-hegemonic world system', respectively (Ribeiro 2006; 2009; 2012). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to grapple too extensively with these latter concepts, as they are far more encompassing than the economically centred narrative that is the focus of this thesis. The emphasis here is to identify the world of GFA as an integral entry point to our understanding of the parallel world of GFB that has developed in response, but surprisingly not always in resistance – as will be explored in latter sections. Moreover, it is the predominance of 'hegemonic' discourses, voiced by the 'powerful agents' and 'agencies' of GFA that has highlighted the necessity for more holistic perspectives on globalisation's multiple manifestations (Ribeiro 2009, p.298).

This section will firstly identify what we mean by GFA by seeing it principally as a reflection of contemporary 'hegemonic globalisation', specifically 'neoliberal globalisation'. Secondly, it will briefly comment on how the discourse of 'hegemonic globalisation' was challenged, through both an economic and political lense. Thirdly, it will show how early conceptualisations of this alternative 'non-hegemonic globalisation' was grounded within the framework of 'informal' economy, but that this is no longer sufficient in an increasingly globalised world.

1.1. HEGEMONIC GLOBALISATION AS A LENSE TO GFB

If we deem GFB as 'non-hegemonic' then by default we must assume that GFA is representative of the 'hegemonic world-system', and specifically 'hegemonic globalisation'. As such, the ideology and chief proponents of 'hegemonic globalisation' can be identified as the key drivers and actors of GFA and whose interests GFB challenges.

Since the 1980s 'hegemonic globalisation' has been rooted in an economic and political ideology of 'neoliberalism'. This section is not dedicated to assessing all aspects and definitions of neoliberalism - it is, arguably, impossible to do so as it has become a catch all phrase denoting a multitude of interpretations (Eagleton-Pierce 2016, p.xiii). Broadly, it is regarded as a theory of political and economic practice whereby the state provides institutional frameworks while steadily retracting itself from the provision of goods and services that should be left to the free market (Harvey 2006, p.2). Key features of neoliberalism include, but are not limited to, privatisation, diminished public welfare provision and liberalised trade and investment. The rise of neoliberalism has been associated to its key early proponents, namely former US President Ronald Reagan and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, both responding to the failures of Keynesian economic policy that had dominated the post-World War II global system, but had since the 1970s increasingly manifested into unmanageable fiscal deficits and a subsequent economic downturn (Steger and Roy 2010, p.21-49).

But, from the 1980s 'global governance institutions', most notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and World Trade Organisation (WTO), have steadily orchestrated a programme of neoliberalism. In response to rising debts and the defaulting of loans, 'global governance institutions' or as Peet (2009) terms them the 'Unholy Trinity', have been able to spread both their influence across the world but also the neoliberal agendas they stand for. Commonly, this has been achieved in the form of 'Structural Adjustments Programmes' (SAPs) that apply neoliberal reform conditionality on the provision of loans (Achcar 2013). These prescriptive one size fits all policy instruments or commonly termed the 'Washington Consensus' were deemed the solution to the economic woes of the developing world (Gwynne 2003, p.3).

Unfortunately, this new age of capitalism has instead been credited with an era of increased global inequality, while Wilson's damning assessment of neoliberalism is summed up by its contribution towards dispossession, disimagination, de-democratization and disposability (Wilson 2018, p.69-79; see also Di Leo and Mehan 2014). To Saad-Filho and Johnston neoliberalism represents "part of a hegemonic project concentrating power and wealth in elite groups around the world" (2005, p.1) while key architects of neoliberalism have increasingly vocalised their discontent over its destructive and hypocritical enforcement across much of the developing world (Stiglitz 2002).

The rise of neoliberalism has been an integral component to contemporary globalisation to the point that 'neoliberal globalisation' has become a commonly accepted interpretation of 'globalisation' as witnessed today (Edelman and Haugerud 2005, p.3). Indeed, though the two concepts are by no mean a synonym for each other they have become so intertwined that globalisation has been preeminently driven by the market imperative rationale of neoliberalism (Harvey 2006, p.2; see also Colas 2005), or as Colas further stresses, the "triumph of neoliberalism as a contemporary ideology has been the appropriation of 'globalisation' as a process denoting the universal, boundless and irreversible spread of market imperatives" (p.71). Saad-Filho and Johnston contend that the two concepts cannot be studied in isolation of each other, as "globalisation is merely the international face of neoliberalism", specifically that neoliberalism's contemporary form is one characterised by the spread of neoliberal ideology across the whole world (2005, p.10); the seemingly unstoppable nature of globalisation is often correlated to a parallel inevitability of neoliberalism's rise (Ibid., p.2).

Neoliberalists regard it as mutually beneficial process especially when they both share common features such as the steady demise of state sovereignty and free mobility of capital (Harvey 2006, p.66). Consequently, an attack on one is deemed as an attack on the other. Peet comments on how those in resistance to 'neoliberal globalisation' are deemed as against 'globalisation' in general, similarly to when those who challenge 'free trade' are regarded as against trade in its entirety when in fact they are calling for 'fair trade' (Peet 2009, p.4). This latter point is particularly contested by actors of GFB.

Scholars have increasingly challenged both concepts, for example, claiming ‘the end of globalisation’ or whether it was always a ‘myth’ in the first place (Breman 1998; Kleinnecht and Ter Wengel 1998; Rugman 2001; Peters 2017). Nevertheless, the agents of ‘neoliberal globalisation’, namely those who we can now call agents of GFA have remained steadfast and have shown little sign of retreating from their promulgation of this system. This principally includes, but is not limited to, the ‘global governance institutions’ and the states they collaborate with or co-opt, and multinational corporations that today have ever-greater access to markets across the world. Indeed Crouch (2011) contends that even when neoliberalism showed its failings as a significant contributor to the 2008 economic crisis, it has rebounded stronger due to the overwhelming power and influence of major corporations, exemplified by the seemingly untouchable international banks.

But, the asymmetric capacity that these actors hold to shape the global economy has come into question through new scholarly discourse and the acts of those outside the ‘hegemonic’ system, the constituents of the ‘non-hegemonic’.

SECTION TWO: HEGEMONIC GLOBALISATION CHALLENGED - ‘GLOBALISATION FROM BELOW’

The term ‘globalisation from below’ -from an international trade perspective- was initially popularised by Portes (2000) in reference to the development of transnational communities in general and transnational enterprises and entrepreneurs in particular. Portes identified that literature had predominantly focused on the “globalisation of capitalist production” that saw heightened flows of capital (including corporate ventures and portfolio investment) driven and benefitted predominantly by the elite economic actors of the developed world (p.253-4). To Portes, a key “working class response” was the establishment of

communities that astride political borders and that, in a very real sense, are “neither here nor there” but in both places simultaneously (Ibid., p.254).

Portes claimed that these “grassroots level” actors and the “often informal”

economic endeavors they pursued were not necessarily in conflict with multinationals, and often depended on the very same advancements in transportation and communication technologies to integrate into the “circles of global trade” (p.258). Indeed, both immigrant transnational enterprises and elite economic actors were driven by “price and information differences across borders”, but whereas the former could rely on its financial strengths to exploit this, the latter drew extensively on its social capital - including complex social networks at home and abroad that often had a cumulative characteristic in expanding political, social and cultural ties, in addition to the economic function that initially drove them (p.263).

Three key points could be derived from Portes (2000) that lay the foundation for the expansion of GFB literature:

Firstly, the notion that contemporary immigration -specifically the movement from the periphery to the developed world- was no longer drawn principally by wage labour incentives and opportunities in the developed world (often as exploitative cheap labour). But rather, transnational communities were increasingly exploring new and alternative economic initiatives that were potentially more lucrative - including the establishment of transnational enterprises. It is important here to consider the case studies and specifically the locations Portes provided as examples of these transnational communities and enterprises. Portes highlighted a new phenomenon but one that was still affiliated to the movement from the periphery to core, for example, Dominican Republican entrepreneurs to the US or Ecuadorian traders to Europe. Whereas contemporary grassroots transnational enterprises were increasingly being established in periphery or semi-periphery countries (such as China) by periphery immigrants from other parts of the developing world. This was indicative of more recent international migration flows that were increasingly dominated by movements between the global south as core states further tightened their borders (Cisse 2013).

Secondly, the identification of parallel global economic systems –what this thesis terms GFB and GFA- that did not necessarily exist in conflict but nevertheless the grassroots form “weaken(s) a fundamental premise of the hegemony of corporate economic elites and domestic ruling classes” (Portes 2000, p.265).

Thirdly, the rise of such phenomenon was potentially unlimited -for now- as it was tied to the so far ever-ongoing advancements that shaped contemporary globalisation and its associated opportunities. This meant transnational enterprises and entrepreneurs were but one facet and set of actors that had or will emerge in the world of GFB, as identified by subsequent studies and notable GFB scholar, Ribeiro.

Ribeiro did not initially explore the concept of two-systems from an economic position, but rather Ribeiro studied the idea of alternative yet interlinked 'hegemonic' and 'non-hegemonic' worlds by recognising that globalisation had so far been contested in "discourse and practice" principally from a 'political' dimension (2009, p.299). Citing the 1992 UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro as a seminal moment in the mobilisation of more sophisticated and coordinated 'anti' and 'alter' globalisation movements: the former against the process and the latter pushing for alternative forms to prevail.

These movements, or acts he called 'political non-hegemonic globalisation', showed to Ribeiro the extent and depth to which segments of society had mobilized themselves to advocate for agendas drastically divergent from the top-down messaging and practices of globalisation's chief advocates that had -to date- dictated the 'hegemonic' structures, principals and more popular understanding of the global economy. Ribeiro saw 'hegemonic globalisation' as "characterised by multinational and transnational agents' to seek out neoliberal capitalist goals" and with its principal actors being "financial capital and transnational corporations" (p.298). Importantly, the predominant focus on politics had highlighted to Ribeiro the lack of a greater exploration of the parallel 'economic' forms of globalisation that existed.

In response, by using the example of 'social transfrontier space' trade activities - specifically the case of Ciudad del Este on the Paraguayan and Brazilian border- Ribeiro highlighted the existence of a form of 'grassroots globalisation' prevalent in the economic and specifically trading realm. The 'trader tourists' and 'street vendors' were not immigrating for wage labour opportunities as conventional perspectives of global south immigration often contended, but rather, openly exchanging in counterfeit and pirated goods while effortlessly crossing national

borders to both source cheaper products and to take advantage of new markets as actors in a world of globalisation less acknowledged. The actors and the trading activities they were engaged in either defied or were distant from the 'establishment', or multinational corporations and international institutions that constituted and lead 'hegemonic globalisation'. Ribeiro coined this a form of 'economic non-hegemonic globalisation' that represented a key facet of the 'non-hegemonic world system', noting that parallel processes could be found across, amongst others, political, economic and social spheres.

2.1. WHY GLOBALISATION FROM 'BELOW'?

Ribeiro's observations expanded on what would have been the more conventional paradigm to analyse such economic activities. Informal, less regulated and hidden segments of the economy are clearly not a new phenomenon. Initial efforts to conceptualise these fringe economic activities - in both developed and developing countries- drew upon the more extensively explored field of 'informal' economies that had traditionally been grounded in location specific case studies (Hart 1973; Portes, Benton et al. 1989). Notable contributions included Hart's (1973) seminal work on the 'informal' sector in Ghana that identified features apparent in the alternative economic practices witnessed today, for example, the often illegal and or illicit, potentially lucrative, sometimes last resort and expanding size of this alternative economic sector.

Other early literature was devoted to the survival strategies of rural migrants in the urban settings where they had relocated. Lomnitz's (1977) study of the 'marginados' (marginalised) in a Mexican shantytown stressed the importance of 'networks of reciprocal exchange' that were heavily dependent on family, kinship and friendship. Smith cited the 'black economy' and 'shadow economy' in Britain, the former indicative of tax evasion and the latter unrecorded activity, both were highly interlinked (1986, p.7). Thomas proposed that informal economic activities could be constituted of four different sectors, the household sector, the informal sector, the irregular sector and the criminal sector (1992, p.3-6). De Soto referred to the 'extra-legal sector' (2002), more recently, Neuwirth (2011) proposed the concept of 'System D' and Nordstrom (2007) called it 'extra-state' activities. Mathews and Alba Vega (2012, p.2), however, contended that the notion of a

formal and informal economy implied that there was, firstly, a clear distinction between the two, and secondly, that they functioned within clearly defined national economies. At a time of heightened globalisation, neither contention was fully valid as there was but one global economy with increasingly indivisible lines between formal and informal, state and non-state, so it was, therefore, more appropriate to use concepts that were more holistic (Ibid.). Indeed, much of the early literature on 'informal' economies predated the rise in 'globalisation' as a framework of studies; what we now see is the 'informal' economy gone global (Carrier 2016, p.10). For this reason, Mathews and Alba Vega based their analysis in the more encompassing term 'globalisation from below' or what has also been referred to as -but not limited to- 'bottom up globalisation', 'low-end globalisation' and 'backroad globalisation', as the processes of the 'informal' sector is nowadays inextricably tied to wider global influences and interactions. These terms will be used interchangeably, but I will predominantly rely on 'globalisation from below' (GFB).

Unfortunately, by operating predominantly in the 'shadows' of the formal economy the world of GFB has often been misunderstood, feared and stigmatised. The actors and their undertakings regularly deemed those of criminals with a potentially destructive influence on the economic and social norms acceptable to the world of GFA. The following section explores literature that challenged this perception and offered an alternative framework to consider the world of GFB, one that acknowledged GFB's faults but also highlighted specific nuances in how we can understand legal and licit practices in a globalised world.

SECTION THREE: DEMISTIFYING THE THREAT OF GFB - COMBATING THE CRIMINAL STEREOTYPE

In recent decades, a 'global criminal economy' (Castells 2000) has developed during a time of expanded 'global illicit trade' (Naím 2005). This has been possible due to technological advancements and multilateral trade liberalisation agreements that have disempowered the state while promoting greater flows of international trade and investment, and heightened levels of unmanageable and difficult to monitor logistical processes such as container shipping (Naim 2005,

p.19).¹³ Each case provides an infrastructure for criminal and illicit acts to proliferate as globalisation facilitates the “transformation of crime beyond people, places and even identifiable victims” (Findlay 1999, p.2).

The more notable forms of criminal transnational trade that have been studied include, but is not limited to: the narcotics industry (Jones 2016; Lyman 2010; Saviano 2016); human trafficking (Duyne and Spencer 2011); money laundering and weapons trade (Cragin and Hoffman 2003; Feinstein 2011; OECD 2014; 2019), including nuclear weapons technology (Zaitseva and Hand 2003). To Naím (2005) this trend is set to grow and become increasingly complex while necessitating drastic overhauls in our approach towards the governing of global trade. If not, the “fabric of society” (Ibid., p.33) is under threat as legitimate industry is undermined and criminal enterprises are able to infiltrate and dictate both local, national and global state institutions in a world where heightened interconnectivity breeds the global trade in illicit and harmful goods and services (Castells 2000, p.207; see also Martin and Romano 1992; Henrich-Boll-Stiftung and Schonenberg 2013).

However, the focus on informal trade networks to the most extreme cases of transnational criminality has resulted in the media and scholars often conflating global trade networks to the acts of principally ‘criminals’ while paying insufficient attention to those caught on the fringes and motivated by wholly different goals. The notion that distributors of copied DVDs are part of the same system of more destructive activities lacks a level of nuance that greatly challenges our capacity to fully understand the parallel forms of globalisation and the actors involved (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012, p.1).

It is, as scholars such as Naím (2005) and Castells (2000) point, undisputable that smugglers and criminal networks have been empowered since the last couple of decades of the 20th Century, or as Naím further claims, that “international terrorism follows in the same footsteps of international illicit trade,

¹³ It is important to note that though ‘illicit’ trade has heightened in recent decades, it is of course by no means a new phenomenon. For example, Jones (2012) considers smuggling in 16th Century Britain and Andreas (2013) covers the importance of smuggling in the US since the 18th century, an illicit act that played a pivotal role in turning the US into the superpower it is today.

employing the same tools and conveniences of the new global economy” (2005, p.35). Chouvy (2013) highlighted that in South East Asia the same or similar trade routes are often used for trafficking all the various illegal goods that traverse the region. However, such analysis only serves to reinforce fear mongering and repressive policies that may in parallel destruct transnational trade practices that are crucial to many agents of GFB that -though operate in the grey areas of legality- are distant from criminal syndicates but are rather seeking to make a simple living on the fringes of the global trading system.

This highlights the need to consider different approaches to our understanding of transnational trade networks, the different forms that exist in the world of ‘globalisation from below’ and the threat they truly pose. This necessitates an exploration of literature that contests these common misconceptions and specifically grapples with the concepts of ‘legality’ and ‘licitness’ and the extent to which they are mutually exclusive. It will become clear that it is unhelpful to consider the actors of GFB as criminals, such a perspective provides important context as I go on to present further literature that challenges misleading narratives on the agents of GFB in *Section Four*.

3.1. LEGAL OR ILLEGAL, LICIT OR ILLICIT?

Schendel and Abraham (2005) do not dispute Naím’s claim that in many cases ‘global illicit trade’ and the criminal networks that sustain it represent an important challenge that should be countered. There is understandably no room for the more heinous acts, such as drug trafficking and people smuggling, perpetrated by criminals adept to hijacking the tools of globalisation to meet their goals. However, Schendel and Abraham stress the multifaceted nature of ‘global illicit trade’ and that too often the media and governments mistakenly use terms such as ‘global crime’ and ‘international criminal networks’ (2005, p.25). It is inappropriate they argue to band all alternative forms of globalisation facilitated transnational trade as the acts of ‘criminals’ (Ibid., p.6).

For example, is it correct to conflate prominent agents of ‘globalisation from below’ such as ‘armpit smugglers’ and ‘ant traders’ that carry small quantities - though large collectively- of contraband and counterfeit products across the world

to the acts of large criminal networks (ibid., p.4)? Equally, to what extent are their actions a real threat to our 'social fabric' when they create job opportunities where their states cannot, or even choose not, to provide? More so how can one fully critique these activities in a world without a 'global sovereign authority' and the subsequent absence of international consensus on what is right or wrong? To this point Schendel and Abraham propose the need to consider the 'origin of regulatory authority'.

In identifying the 'origin of regulatory authority' the author's point of departure is to stress the need to reconsider conventional social science lead discourse that has the 'state' as the "foundational unit of analysis" (Shendel and Abraham 2005, p.4). Such an approach restricts ones critique of transnational linkages to that which the state deems 'legal' or 'illegal'- by law. By so doing it limits an equally - if not often more crucial- unit of analysis that questions the extent to which society sanctions and finds legitimate acts that might in a formal sense be deemed legal or illegal; that is, what society finds 'licit' or 'illicit'. This issue is particularly profound when 'illicitness' and the 'laws of state' are seen in sharp opposition whereas in reality they often share a grey space (Ibid. p.7).

The tendency to hold the state as the optimal bearer of judgment is flawed as Ribeiro comments in response to the work of Heyman and Smart (1999): "there is no moral monopoly of honesty by any social segment, and relationships between what is legal and illegal are complex and often blurred" (2012, p.222). Castells contends that there is a "thin line between criminal traffic and government inspired-trade" (2000, p.181).¹⁴ That which is generally perceived as legal in a globalised world is often the construct of the states, international institutions and actors with the greatest influence, highlighting the asymmetrical power relations that separate the parallel worlds of globalisation from 'above' and 'below'. States have historically manipulated lines of illicitness for their own survival and to delegitimise those that contest it (Heyman 1999; Shendel and Abraham 2005, p.7; Nordstrom 2004, p.114).

By challenging the hegemony of state promulgated legitimacy through a bottom

¹⁴ In reference to human body parts trafficking.

up and societal level perspective it becomes apparent that what a state deems illegal by no means guarantees that its society views it as illicit. We enter a space that is often “a little bit legal, a little bit illegal” where the laws of the state are contested by the law of the people who instill their own parameters of legality and illicitness (Galemba 2008, p.19). From a GFB perspective scholars highlight that such a dynamic can regularly be found across different market places where the state often selectively withdraws certain governing capacities in an act that legitimises society to set its own norms (Flynn 1997; Aguiar 2013; Galemba 2012; 2013).

Few places present this tension more than ‘borderland’ territories or ‘transfrontier space’ where illegal transborder trade provides a wealth of opportunities to those who have often been marginalised by their state, while the state itself is often not motivated to fully govern these sites as long as an appropriate balance between ‘profit’ and ‘security’ is maintained from it turning a blind eye (Galemba 2013, p.279; see also Nordstrom 2011; Rabossi 2012; Gauthier 2012; Holzlehner 2014). Scholars have shown that the borderland communities, in particular, can play a key role in both mediating transborder trade, but importantly, also setting the terms for what is deemed illegal and illicit in the absence of an effective state authority, in a manner that those who pass through their border space -such as transborder merchants- are forced to oblige (Flynn 1997; Galemba 2012).

At the same time, the application of this paradigm to cross-border activities is particularly complex as though many states and their citizens might share certain common values -often underpinned by jointly signed upon multilateral agreements- it is not unanimous in the absence of a ‘global sovereign authority’ nor consistent implementation of law across the world (Shendel and Abraham 2005, p.17-18). As such, during the lifecycle of a transnationally traded commodity -as part of a broader commodity chain- it invariably weaves in and out of alternative regulatory spaces and with that across different lines of legality and licitness.

Schendel and Abraham presented this contention by stating that in the conventional study of commodity chains the act of ‘consumption’ often received little attention, but that in the world of illicit commodities trade this stage of

'exchange' between two actors was integral as it was often the point of 'transformation' (2005, p.16). Specifically, that during this process of 'exchange' a good may 'transform' -often on multiple occasions- from the legal to illegal, licit to illicit, and vice-versa. In such cases who has the authority to label these practices and how can they be countered if the different states and societies involved have divergent views let alone capacities and willingness to regulate? Again, this can be evidenced by literature on transborder trade where neighbouring states might have, for example, disparate taxation policies and laws, resulting in the smuggling of products from the state that is least regulated (Neuwirth 2011, p. 114; see also Rabossi 2012).

In response to such contradictions Schendel and Abraham proposed concepts such as (il) licit, formally illegal but socially licit. Equally there is (il) legal, socially deemed illicit yet officially legal. It is from this basis that we can further contest the difference between 'globalisation from below' traders that engage in (il) licit activities dependent on social networks operating in a decentralised horizontal way based on trust" to those engaged in the far darker sides of the 'global illegal economy' that operate in a hierarchical structure with "central planning, private plotting and the use of illegitimate violence" (Ribeiro 2012, p.226). This division is representative of what Ribeiro presents as a pyramid of activities affiliated to 'non-hegemonic globalisation' or 'globalisation from below' (2009, p.314). At the top are the criminal networks while the bottom echelons belong to, amongst others, petty traders that constitute 'grassroots globalisation'.

This notion is further supported by early commentators such as De Soto in his observation of the growth of the informal sector in Peru and their motivations. Specifically, he observed that "for most illegality was not antisocial in intent, like trafficking in drugs, theft or abduction, but was designed to achieve such essentially legal objectives as building a house, providing a service, or developing a business" (2002, p.12). This is notwithstanding the fact that for those engaged in such activities at the 'bottom', neither they nor their communities often see their actions as 'illicit' least of all criminal (Nordstrom 2004; 2007; Neuwirth 2011; Erami and Keshavarzian 2015).

Indeed, the very concepts and terms with which they are labelled are often foreign

to them just as the laws they break are often unknown. Galemba insightfully showed that for local communities on the Mexico-Guatemala border their concept of legality and legitimacy is not only fluid but can be shaped by local, national and international conditions at that time (2012, p.280). While the disparity between what they and the state might consider as the most concerning forms of smuggling is highlighted by the sentiment that in the past, “smuggling undocumented migrants [was] as innocuous as smuggling corn” (Ibid.)

SECTION FOUR: AGENTS OF GFB - AN UNRULY WORLD OF ECONOMIC SURVIVORS?

Now that we have identified that the actors of GFB do not belong in the same realm as the criminals and criminal acts that they are regularly associated with, it is necessary to consider in more detail who they are and what motivates them. Here too literature identifies further misconceptions, such as it purely being a ‘developing’ world phenomenon without rules and primarily the act of the poor and marginalised that are against globalisation. What literature shows is the many commonalities between GFA and GFB, often shared goals but different tools available to pursue them. But, also that GFB agents can play additional roles, not just as economic actors, as they shape the spaces in which they operate.

Mathews and Alba Vega contended that as GFB involved activities of illegal and illicit nature it is understandably more prevalent in less developed states as these societies tended to be characterised by the highest rates of poverty, social inequality, and the weakest levels of regulatory enforcement (2012, p.10): conditions under which ‘globalisation from below’ could thrive. Whereas in developed states there was, arguably, a greater adherence to the rule of law, such as crackdowns on ‘dirty money’ that was commonplace in the transactions of ‘globalisation from below’ (Mathews 2012, p.69-70). Yet, Shepherd (2012) showed that GFB is regularly found in the ‘developed’ world, while rather than an economy of unruly illegal behaviour, scholars have also challenged false assumptions that regulation at the level of GFB does not exist.

De Soto cited a ‘system of extralegal norms’ to avoid ‘anarchy’ in the absence of

a credible and enforced official legal system, and that these laws were derived from the market economy in which these agents operated (2002, p.13). Neuwirth's interpreted his observations of the informal economy as one that "follows well-worn though unwritten rules" informed by the "spirit of organised improvisation" that helped to coordinate the intricate relations between, amongst others, street vendors, landlords and the state; therefore, an emphasis in the word 'system' in what he coined System D (2011, p.18). Alba Vega (2012) presented cases of 'peddler leaders' and their role in the establishment and running of political organisations to better regulate the acquisition, usage and distribution of public space for the peddler market economy in Mexico. Galemba noted the locally agreed upon -yet illegal- transborder trade tax that involved transparent collection and bookkeeping with equitable disbursement for local development projects; achieved through the collective governance and implementation of the whole border community. Spector (2017) showed how in a country plagued by issues of economic and political instability 'local islands of order' could be found in Kyrgyzstan's Bazaars - specifically Dordoi market in Bishkek. The author stressed the need to look at bazaars beyond just physical spaces but as a set of institutions where traders instilled stability through, for example, the establishment of trade unions, but also individually by drawing upon their experience of trade to become respected Bazaar elders (p.10).

In all of these cases we see both merchant communities involved in the social-economic and even political spheres in the locales that they operate, but also, that their activities are directly related to their engagement with a globalised economy. This latter point is particularly important as it challenges the misconception that agents of 'globalisation from below' are somehow in defiance of 'hegemonic globalisation' even if their practices might be deemed as a frustration to GFA. In studying Mexican 'ant traders' Gauthier (2012) draws upon Campbell and Heyman's (2007) notion of 'slantwise' behaviour for explanatory power: acts that are not intended forms of political resistance, but nevertheless challenge the state as individuals or communities pursue their own interests.

Mathews and Alba Vega (2012) stress that GFB agents are not against globalisation per say but rather seek to benefit from it through the channels most readily available to them. They, like their counterparts in 'globalisation from

above' seek upward mobility and prosperity. The same innovations in technology, transportation and communication that underpin 'hegemonic globalisation' too can serve their purposes (Portes 2000). Globalisation has manufactured goods that they can now afford, offered access to markets they used not to reach and created economic opportunities and employment that previously did not exist. While both the formal and informal sector regularly face the same risks, and in many cases adopt similar risk mitigation strategies to ensure the viability of their respective trading activities (Hastings and Wang 2012, p.182). For this reason, Ribeiro did not refer to these practices as 'counter' or 'anti' hegemonic globalisation as that would imply their desire to end neoliberal capitalist globalisation when this was not the case (2012, p.224). Globalisation was as much an opportunity for these actors as it was for the agents of 'globalisation from above'.

Ironically, Mathews and Alba Vega contended that the actors of GFB were in fact out 'neoliberalising' those that operate at GFA. As at its core GFB was reflective of the main tenets of neoliberalism, specifically that it was guided by 'free-market principles' while its actors challenged the role of state intervention - principally by avoiding and evading state control. Whereas, neoliberalism promulgated by GFA today is often seen as an extension of imperial and colonial interest (Radice 2005) as the 'global governing institutions' deploy policies that are undemocratically decided upon and "govern an economy that their neoliberal ideology insists is best left institutionally ungoverned" (Peet 2009, p.31). This then provides a useful entry point to further unpack our (mis) understanding of the actors of GFB. Here again, scholars have explored the often multifaceted backgrounds and motivations of trade communities all across the world, but also their often broader impact beyond just the trading realm.

4.1. WHO IS AN AGENT OF GFB?

To begin, it is important to acknowledge that though many engage in GFB activity as an avenue for economic survival, the informal economy is "not a euphemism for poverty" as the same actors might also turn to the formal sector (Portes et al. 1989, p.11). Indeed, the incomes generated can often be greater in less regulated work, in certain cases offering unprecedented opportunities to accumulate wealth

outside the purview of the state (Neuwirth 2011, p.5-6). This is of course not to say that all agents of the informal economy are financially stable or indeed prosperous, but as De Soto contended in his research, they were not all 'unruly squatters' and 'urban pests' as were perceived by the elites, but were rather "enterprising citizens carrying the nation's economy on their backs" (2002, p.xvii).

In fact, to be an agent of the globalised informal economy, especially one that has the means to travel to distant markets and to navigate the various pitfalls of conducting such trade it necessitates a sufficient degree of human and financial capital. Scholars such as Bork-Hüffer et al. (2016) and Mathews and Yang (2012) proposed in their observations of African traders in China and Hong Kong that many were often the "upper crust" in their country, well-educated and connected. Though, by often residing illegally in the country in which they did business they must regularly find strategies to evade state authorities as their unregulated presence made them officially criminals (Haugen 2012; Mathews et al. 2014).

Marsden made a significant contribution to our understanding of previously misinterpreted trader communities and their influence in developing 'transnational and trans-cultural connections', specifically in relation to Afghan traders (2016a, p.1). Marsden redefined false narratives of Afghanistan as a principally 'pre-modern' or 'medieval' society and Afghan traders as 'tribesmen', 'militant Islamists' or simply profiteers of Afghanistan's 'war economy'. Marsden contended that an analysis of overseas Afghan traders through the lens of 'refugee', 'victim' or 'displaced' discounts their connection to "wider networks of trade and sociality" that defined them in manners far beyond the narrative ascribed to 'refugees' (2015, p.1012).

This perspective was similarly shared in Barndt's study of female tomato pickers in Latin America that should not be regarded as "mere victims" but were agents in their own right that navigated a system that both exploited and benefitted them in their pursuit of family survival (2008, p.67). Marsden's research also identified the role of 'morality' in the practices of traders, but also how, due to their transnational mobility and interactions with overseas state authorities, many considered themselves as every day 'diplomats' active in the spaces that were less monopolised by the nation-state (2016a, p.21; 2016b, p.72). This is echoed

by the work of Bodomo in regard to the African trader community in China that he contended served as a “bridge” between the local Chinese population and Africans in China and the newly arrived (2010).

Indeed a plethora of literature highlights the role of GFB actors in shaping the spaces in which they operate; in particular in nodes of economic exchange such as market cities. For example, the translocal and transnational mobility of African traders results in the establishment of ‘transient spaces’ in China (Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016). Li et al. (2009) identified the ‘transnational spaces’ or ‘ethnic enclaves’ where African traders had established a community dynamic beyond simply trade – though unfortunately often lacking harmony with the local Chinese population. Carrier (2016) presented the concept of ‘displaced development’ with reference to the Somali migrant (predominantly refugee) community in Kenya: ‘displaced development’ is the process by which development is achieved in a particular country by those that did not originate from that place. This is insightful at a time of accelerated refugee migration and the both challenges and opportunities it brings to the recipient states.

This chapter has so far sought to untangle the worlds of GFA and GFB, with a particular focus on challenging misconceptions of both the practices and those engaged in this bottom up economy. But, as I have on occasion alluded to, it is equally important not to consider GFA and GFB as only in sharp contrast with each other as such a binary is not reflective of the regular overlapping of these two worlds. Indeed, the very functioning of GFB must consistently be studied within the context of what is happening at the level of GFA, for the rise and proliferation of GFB activity is invariably informed by, for example, what the state chooses to allow. This is particularly so when GFB can often be a conduit for actors of GFA, such as states and multinationals, to find alternative forms to profit.

SECTION FIVE: BLENDING THE BINARY - THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF GFA AND GFB

The agents of ‘globalisation from above’ have regularly called for more intense crackdowns of GFB, demanding the banning of such activities and punishing their

proponents (Mathews and Vega 2012).¹⁵ Multinational corporations lobby their governments who increasingly turn to multilateral institutions to introduce and implement safeguards against the proliferation of GFB activities – in particularly the trade of counterfeit goods (International IP Enforcement Summit 2014; 2017; Hung 2003; Lin 2011). Arguably, a system that deprives states of taxes and corporations of legitimate profits is harmful to sustainable economic development. The infringement of copyrights and spread of pirated goods is viewed as undermining and threatening to those formally engaged in the sectors GFB contest.

These perspectives are buttressed by early commentators on the ‘informal’ economy that contend that its long-term viability as a source of growth is limited, and that it should remain principally a subsidiary role to the formal sector as it does not provide for meaningful long-term growth, but rather, short-term survival strategies (Portes et al. 1989). In Smith’s analysis of Britain’s early ‘shadow economy’ he cited the risk of the informal –untaxed and less efficient- economy developing at the cost of formal and ‘efficient patterns of economic activity’, a phenomenon that had a significant impact on state tax collection and the legitimacy of formal economic indicators such as GDP (1986, p.4).

What the above perceptions insufficiently acknowledged is the intricate ties that often already exist between GFA and GFB, in so doing obfuscating the extent to which GFA truly wishes for a complete removal or reconfiguration of the GFB system. As a point of departure, scholars contend that it would be incorrect to assume that the perpetrators of illegal and illicit practices are solely by agents of ‘globalisation from below’. Indeed, there exists a plethora of complementary and contradictory dynamics between the two systems that can be both reinforcing and destructive. The perspective that ‘globalisation from below’ should be cracked down upon is challenged when considering that the biggest offenders of transnational trade crime are often the very multinationals - routinely indicted for tax avoidance, money laundering and exploitative practices- that supposedly represent the pinnacle of globalisation.

¹⁵ See also the annual ‘Illicit Trade Report’ produced by the World Customs Organization (WCO) since 2012 (latest version 2017).

Scholars such as Nordstrom (2007) commented on how agents of GFA were often far more corrupt than those of GFB, including their leading role in the smuggling of goods through the world's ports. Nordstrom cited Stiglitz's damning comment in 2002 that the private sector and multinationals were engaging in "corruption on an almost unfathomable scale" (p.58). An important perspective was highlighted by Neuwirth who claimed that System D "stands beyond the law, yet is deeply entwined with the legally recognised business world" (2011, p.16). He pointed to many cases where multinationals sought to restrict and control the proliferation of GFB but, at the same time, pursued often-intricate techniques to work with it and benefit from the opportunities it provided (Ibid., p.130).¹⁶ The guiding principle to these GFA actors was not whether purchases were made through channels of globalisation from 'above' or 'below', what mattered was that their products were consumed. In Wang and Hasting's study of illegal cross border trade between China and North Korea, they highlighted that it was often impossible to differentiate between conducting business 'informally' and 'formally' as, for example, trading 'formally' invariably required 'informal' practices such as paying bribes (2018, p.186).

The interdependence of GFA and GFB is particularly apparent when considering the prevalence of GFB activity in response to the broader political landscape in which GFB operates, as well as both the 'formal' and 'informal' practices and policies of agents of GFA. Here, it is useful to explore what studies have shown about the role of the state, and inter-state relations. This includes regular scholarly attention on the impact of inter and intra state 'conflict', or 'war economies', as a phenomenon that promotes lucrative trading opportunities, often in the case of neighbouring countries with either conflict induced closed or heavily regulated borders (Nordstrom 2004; De Waal 2013; Merkle et al. 2014).

In Andreas's (2008) insightful study of smuggling networks during the siege of Sarajevo (1992-95), he contrasted violent conflict by day involving the same

¹⁶ Neuwirth cites the case of Proctor & Gamble. Upon recognising that its highest growth opportunities were not formal wholesalers but often informal local retailers in the developing world, it decided to fund and create intricate supply chains so that its products found their way into the hands of petty vendors, often constituting the lowest levels of the retail supply chain (2011, p. 130).

parties who engaged in inter-ethnic economic collaboration by night; a phenomenon that perpetuated the conflict to ensure profitable gains could be maintained by political and business elites. Nordstrom (2004, p.145) warned how “war forged” illegal practices can become so embedded that, unfortunately, in times of peace they remain just as resilient; she too reminded of how actors of GFA are heavily dependent on the lucrative opportunities found in the ‘shadow’ economies in war zones (Ibid., p.115). Conflict in the Middle East, in particular, has been the focus of recent studies for its role in driving both large and small scale speculative traders to the market places of China (Simpfendorfer 2011; Pliez 2012; Marsden 2016c; Anderson 2018).

While the existence and role of borders, as intrinsically political constructs established by the agents of the hegemonic world system, is how we can even speak of GFB as though merchants might formally deride them, there would be no such thing as transborder trade without them (Donnan and Wilson 1999, p.105). The heightened role of ‘borders’ between the now independent states of the former Soviet Union has especially contributed to the study of illegal cross border trade and the emerging role of ‘shuttle traders’ in particular - often following the adoption of new economic and trading policies in a post-socialist context or as a result of their geographic location (Humphrey and Skvirskaja 2009; Humphrey 1999; Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Holzlehner 2014).

The formal economic relations between states is also key when studying the rise of GFB activity. This includes the impact of international trade agreements that can, on the one hand, result in the crackdown on the proliferation of certain goods thus leading to heightened smuggling, while on the other, diminish the role of illegal trading networks as goods become more available in the formal sector (Aguiar 2012, p.249). The accession of certain states into multilateral institutions such as the WTO, especially evidenced in the case of China, also has a significant impact on the availability and movement of the type of goods characteristic of GFB (Wang 2003; Simpfendorfer 2009; List et al. 2012). While in a domestic context, in many of the world’s most active sites of GFB activity formal state regulations under which a trader must operate often contain various loopholes that facilitate otherwise illegal practices and profiting (Humphrey and Skvirskaja 2009; Aguiar 2013; Jacobs 2016).

To further understand this often selective ambivalence of the state to such practices requires a deeper unpacking of how the state can in fact benefit from GFB activity. It is useful here to draw back to literature on site specific studies that show how the state might choose to actively withdrawal its governing capacities so as to make its presence somewhat 'invisible' (Galemba 2013). Studies have shown that by allowing (il) licit practices to prevail, rather than undermining the state's legitimacy it can in fact strengthen its viability in other ways (Roitman 2004; Galemba 2012; Donnan and Wilson 1999).

This includes, for example, providing employment in the absence of opportunities created by the state or as mechanism for local communities to illegally raise funds that can then be invested in local development projects (Galemba 2012). In such cases, the burden of the state can actually be taken on by those engaged in GFB. In other cases, by turning a blind eye to the illegal yet lucrative opportunities made available by GFB, state officials can even garner political support in the form of votes or campaign funds (Galemba 2012, p.838; see also Humphreys and Skvirskaja 2009; Alba Vega 2012). GFB actors might also be advocates of political peace and stability to ensure a reliable market place (Papadakis 1997; De Waal 2013; Merkle et al. 2014).

It is such conditions that led to scholars such as Heyman compiling research to show how different states might not only tolerate but even reinforce illegal practices (1999; see also Heyman and Smart 1999). A study by Smart (1999) is useful as it contended five conditions of 'persistence' even when the economic act was illegal (p.103-5). For example, the notion of 'ambiguous persistence' whereby the state recognises its illegality but there is a degree of social legitimacy - akin to Shendel and Abraham's (2005) notion of (il) licit. Furthermore, the cost of monitoring and control may be disproportionate to potential gains - such as those just listed. This dynamic is common in studies of transborder trade and borderland communities that regularly mediate such activity (Flynn 1997; Galemba 2012). More worryingly is 'managed persistence' whereby the status of illegality and the associated regulations and bureaucracies provided opportunities for the state to profit- Smart contended that this was a tool regularly deployed by predatory states. This is evident when considering the privileged access of state agents to profit through corruption and bribery, often found in

studies that highlight the influence of officials in the governing of trade routes, both within and across borders.

The corrupt role of the police and border military guards is well documented in cases across Africa, Central America and Asia (Flynn 1997; Nordstrom 2007; Aguiar 2013; Galemba 2012; Endres 2014). Notably, customs officials at ports across the world exist to uphold the rules and regulations of the state they represent. Yet, bribery and their blind eye contribute to an estimated 90% of all shipped goods being either under or undeclared (Nordstrom 2007, p.20). Therefore, though the extraction of such illegal funds can, for example, support underpaid officials, they can also contribute to the maintenance of corrupt state institutions. Finally, the notion of 'subversive persistence' is worth noting as a process by which illegality is encouraged by agents from outside the country where such practices take place. This means that the benefits, that might include the challenging of local political control are designed to go towards, for example, another state.

This section showed that though it often appears possible to frame GFA and GFB as two opposite and resisting phenomenon's, the reality is quite different. As much as the rise of GFB can be seen as a response to GFA, literature showed how it is also dependent on, or at least influenced by, the formal and informal policies and practices of the agents of hegemonic globalisation. In the same way, GFA is able to derive a range of socio-economic and even political gains from GFB activity, to the point that it might actively turn a blind eye or even encourage such practices. This then highlighted the necessity not to completely untangle these two worlds, but to better understand their interdependence. Such a perspective will be vital when studying the broader conditions that inform GFB as seen in Palestine.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

This literature review has provided a broad analysis of 'globalisation from below', specifically by locating it within wider debates of globalisation and by challenging its many misconceptions - including the actors, their acts and where they operate. Importantly, though GFB has regularly been framed in stark contrast to GFA, the

interconnectivity of the 'hegemonic' and 'non-hegemonic' worlds show significant degrees of interdependence, routinely drawing upon the same tools to achieve similar goals, but in often disparate social, economic and political environments.

Scholarship has presented the principal ways in which we can study GFB, through the 'trade routes' and the movement of specific commodities, but more commonly the 'nodes' of transnational trade and the 'actors' that sustain them. Naturally, most research is a combination of them all. But of notable importance is how literature conveys GFB as predominantly a world of (il) licit activity - formally illegal yet socially sanctioned (Shendel and Abraham 2005). This not only helps to remove harmful stereotypes that equate GFB to criminal behaviour but it provides a valuable prism through which to interpret the acts of these transnational agents and the infrastructure that sustains them. It also reinforces the resilience and importance of GFB as so many are dependent on its existence - including agents of GFA.

In regard to this thesis, the literature on GFB from across the world highlights particular issues that one needs to be conscious of when exploring Palestinian GFB:

Firstly, a consistent awareness of Schendall and Abraham's contention of different 'origins of regulatory authority' and how this shapes local interpretations of legal/illegal and licit/illicit. This point was stressed to me when a researcher at the Peres Centre For Peace in Tel Aviv told me that "the Palestinians have two and a half government's worth of bureaucracy instead of one" (Tel Aviv, Oct. 2017). Specifically, that Palestinian traders must navigate both Israeli and Palestinian trade policy but also the Paris Protocol that governs trade between the two sides. This means throughout the transaction process traders and their imports weave in and out of different formal regulatory authorities, as well as a range of socially accepted norms of two conflicting parties.

Secondly, an appreciation that actors of GFB should not be defined purely by their economic practices, but that they can also be active agents in broader social and political arenas. It is possibly true, as stated by Ribeiro (2009), that GFB traders prioritise economic gain over political defiance of the establishment, or

that when they appear to resist the state it is better interpreted as an unintentional byproduct of pursuing economic self-interest (Campbell 2009, p.12; see also Campbell and Heyman 2007). Yet it is important not to discount the possibility of them playing a role in resisting the political conditions in which they operate, or in other cases acquiescing to a political status quo that inhibits the opportunities of others. One can further consider the work of Nordstrom (2004; 2007) and Andreas (2008) in particular as evidence that political conflict and lucrative profit often go hand in hand - a spectrum of responses await a trader faced with such a predicament.

Thirdly, literature has shown both the direct and indirect implications of the world of GFA on the rise of GFB activity. I specifically highlighted the role of the state and how it can often makes its presence and affiliated governing authority comparatively 'invisible' (Galemba 2013) so as to allow for socio-economic and political gains that can be derived from either turning a blind eye to GFB, or instilling conditions that enable it to prevail at heightened levels. In the case of Palestine, one must, therefore, consistently question not just the motives of the Palestinian Authority, but particularly the Israeli authorities. Here, it is worth considering Smart's (1999) contention of 'subversive persistence' as a mechanism by which one state authority seeks to benefit from the prevalence of illegality in another.

This then alludes to the fourth crucial consideration, that is the uniqueness of Palestinian GFB and the inability to fully explain it without a comprehension of Palestine-Israel relations, as neither Palestinian GFB nor Palestinian trade with China are free from the influence of both formal and informal Israeli occupation policy. This challenges one's ability to draw too extensively on GFB literature, as even though in such scholarship we regularly see a mitigated role of the state, nevertheless, states are generally recognised as sovereign entities as are their borders that form the basis of transborder trade. In the case of Palestine, it is scarcely possible to speak of, for example, sovereignty or recognised and demarcated borders.

Instead, it is necessary to understand the framework through which Israeli policy is designed and orchestrated towards Palestine in general and its economic and

trade sector in particular. This thesis contends that Palestinian GFB was founded, exists, operates and survives in a settler colonial context: a 'structured' approach that actively seeks to undermine Palestine politically, economically and socially as part of a broader Zionist project. Unlike all other GFB literature, it is, therefore, the settler colonial paradigm that Palestinian GFB emerges from, but also that which actors of GFB may challenge or reinforce - as the empirical chapters will contest. I will explore settler colonialism in the following section.

CHAPTER FOUR: SETTLER COLONIALISM

INTRODUCTION

The seemingly intractable Israel-Palestine 'conflict' has dominated scholarly literature for many decades, and is regularly considered, at least officially, as the central obstacle to stability in the Middle East. Yet, over seventy years since the Palestinian 'Nakba' ('Catastrophe') and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 -not to discount the preceding decades of Zionist expansion in both Ottoman and Mandate Palestine- it is scarcely possible to foresee a just resolution to the 'conflict' in the near future.

To a growing number of scholars, and forever apparent to Palestinians who continue to live under Israeli domination, a notable impediment has been the framing of the 'conflict'. Specifically, that largely misinformed narratives and inappropriate theories have been deployed to rationalise the conditions on the ground, while simultaneously, offering solutions that do not address the core underlying issues that actually dictate the 'intractability' of the situation.

There is, therefore, an imminent need for a "more accurate framing" (Pappe 2014, p.350), or an attempt to "get the tenses right" (Veracini 2015, p.268), and not be misled by the false paradigms of, amongst others, 'conflict' or 'occupation', but rather, the realities of Zionist settler colonialism. And accordingly, any contributions towards a just and viable solution will not be found in 'state-building' or 'conflict resolution' efforts, but in 'decolonisation'. Such a shift represents a profound change in ones analytical approach towards Palestine studies, but importantly, also a practical shift in the tools that should be adopted to seek a just resolution to the Palestinian struggle.

A similar principle must therefore be considered when trying to explain Palestinian GFB, as without adequately comprehending the local conditions that inform how GFB manifests in Palestine, it is not possible to truly unpack both its roots, and its short and long term implications. This thesis contends that Palestinian GFB has emerged and functions in the context of Zionist settler colonialism; a framework that has steadily been adopted by scholars and

activists, even if it is still largely dismissed by political elites - many of whom are supposedly responsible for mediating a solution.

The settler colonial framework allows for a more holistic understanding of Palestinian GFB, as it necessitates a consideration of how Palestinian GFB emerged not out of comparatively isolated social, economic and political 'events' over recent decades, but in response to a longstanding and 'structured' Zionist colonial project that seeks to dispossess the Palestinians of their rights, and importantly, their land. This chapter introduces settler colonialism as a concept and theory, but also, through regular signposting, shows how it will underpin the empirical case studies of this thesis.

This chapter will be structured as follows. *Section One* provides a brief overview of what is 'settler colonialism', by primarily contrasting it to what is now considered its antithetic, but for a long time was thought of as its equal, 'colonialism'. This includes the different techniques deployed by the settler polity to achieve its goal of native 'elimination'. *Section Two* presents an overview of how the settler colonial framework applies, and has so far been applied, to Zionist colonialism. *Section Three* introduces the first of two settler colonial informed concepts that I will predominantly draw upon throughout this thesis. The first is 'de-development', a structured strategy to undermine the economic capacity and independence of Palestinians, and by virtue, also mitigating political sovereignty. *Section Four* explores the notion of 'deterritorialisation'. By building on this concept from alternative scholarly fields I put forward what I believe that 'deterritorialisation' means in a settler colonial and GFB context. *Section Five* briefly ties together the two concepts of GFB and settler colonialism as the applicable framework for the subsequent empirical chapters.

SECTION ONE: WHAT IS SETTLER COLONIALISM?

In the last two decades settler colonial studies has increasingly consolidated itself as an independent field of scholarly research. Recent literature has highlighted the truly global nature of settler colonialism across both time and space, by expanding studies beyond more commonly considered contexts such as European settler movements to North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Elkins and Pedersen 2005; Cavanagh and Veracini 2016). This has both shone a light on and created a space to critique cases found elsewhere that, for example, challenge it as a phenomenon bound primarily to the role of European 'white' settlers. This might include the emergent interest in Asian settler colonialism, such as Fujikane and Okamura's (2008) focus on Asian settlers in Hawaii as part of a broader U.S settler colonial project, to cases of Japanese settler colonialism in Korea, Taiwan, and the Island of Hokkaido (Legislature 2005; Lynn 2005; Hirano 2015; 2016). Such explorations have stressed both the geographic spread but also the temporal continuity and resilience of settler colonialism, and how it until today, continues to dictate our global 'present' (Veracini 2015).

The application of the settler colonial framework has largely been possible due to its progressive detachment from the scholarly fields that it had previously been affiliated to – specifically, colonial and postcolonial studies. Led extensively by scholars Lorenzo Veracini and Patrick Wolfe, an acknowledgement of the differences between 'colonialism' and 'settler colonialism' has been both the most logical way of identifying settler colonialism's more unique features, and in so doing, has altered our perspectives on how to contest the latter phenomenon.

The conflation of colonialism and settler colonialism is understandable as they share many key similarities. Most notably, backed by a powerful metropole they involve the movement and subsequent reproduction of an exogenous community in a land where they thereafter seek to cement a relationship of domination over an indigenous, i.e. already existing, people (Veracini 2010). Yet, the commonalities, arguably, start to untangle thereafter. In the case of colonialism, the principle goal is to derive surplus economic value from the indigenous people and land where colonisers have relocated (Veracini 2017). This means

establishing, and importantly, reproducing asymmetric power relations that allow for the ongoing exploitation of the colony for the benefit of the colonisers and the metropole to whom they answer to (Ibid.). Though the fate of the colony is, by all intents and purposes, largely dictated by the policies of the colonial rulers, nevertheless, the goal is not specifically to establish a new and permanent sovereign political order. The colony is to remain distinct and separate to the metropole, while the colonisers, or as insightfully termed colonial 'sojourners', do eventually 'return' home (Veracini 2010, p.6).

On the contrary, the settler colonial dynamic is notably different. Most crucially, is that though the indigenous population can still -at least in the initial phases- be exploited for their labour they are not considered indispensable as they would be in a classical colonial context (Wolfe 1999, p.163). But rather, the central and overwhelming interest of the settler community is native land, and not the marrying of indigenous labour and land for the economic benefit of the exogenous agency (Wolfe 1999, p.163). Specifically, settler communities wish to both bring their sovereignty to the settled locale, as well as to establish a new political order thereafter (2010 p.3). And so, the presence of an indigenous population invariably leads to Mamdani's assessment that "settlers are made by conquest, not just by immigration" (1998).

Unlike colonialism, the long term status of 'settlers' and their relationship with the metropole is also an important differentiator. In the settler colonial context the settler population wants preeminent control of the settler project while seeking distinction from its metropole (Veracini 2011, p.3; see also Elkins and Pedersen 2005, p.3-4). In the process, aiming to establish an independent sovereign entity, or a new nation-state, as in the case of, for example, Canada and Australia. While the success of the settler project also becomes dependent on the positioning of the settler as an exogenous population. Specifically, and contrary to colonialism whereby the coloniser pursues the reproduction of their dominant relationship over the indigenous community while retaining their identity as the 'coloniser', the 'settler' seeks dominance but simultaneously wants to become 'indigenous' – at the cost of the native 'other' that already occupies this space (Veracini 2011, p.3). The ultimate objective is to be "settled" or "postcolonial" as the settler project is "erased" or "extinguished" into hopefully a state of irreversibility as settlers now

permanently and independently reside and rule a land in the image of the settler body polity (Ibid., p.2-3). And so, more simply, colonialism can be regarded as a project of 'exploitation' while settler colonialism is one of 'replacement' (Wolfe 1999, p.163). Or as Veracini aptly puts, colonialism can be considered a dynamic of "you, work for me" whereas settler colonialism is "you, go away" (2011, p.1).

Herein lies settler colonialism's particular relationship with land and the indigenous population; the former being completely indispensable and the latter much less so. This dynamic is integral to an understanding of settler colonialism as it informs the deeper motivations of the settler polity that help to sustain its project over time. More so, it highlights the pre-eminent challenge presented by the indigenous population who stand in the way. What is, therefore, called upon in pursuit of acquiring as much land as possible, while simultaneously dispossessing it from the native population, is what Wolfe has termed the 'logic of elimination' (1999; 2001a; 2007). That is, a manifestation of multifaceted techniques to "eliminate" the native population to secure the ascendancy of the settler population. A logic that, as Wolfe states, is "impervious to regime change", and is indicative of both the embedded and resilient 'structural' nature of settler colonialism (2010, p.120). It also reveals how the often deplorable acts affiliated to the settler colonial project should not be considered as individual moments in history, but rather, that settler colonial invasion is "a structure not an event" (Wolfe 1999, p.163).

The 'logic of elimination' is enacted through the deployment of a range of methods across both time and space. In Wolfe's seminal work on the experience of natives in Australia he identified three interconnected and sequential processes that defined settler strategies to achieve domination through maximum land appropriation, with minimal indigenous presence (1999; 2001b). Firstly, 'confrontation', characterised by often violent and deadly acts to eliminate native people (1999, p.168-9). Secondly, 'carceration', that can be further divided into 'segregation' and 'reservation' as natives are incentivised or coerced to reside in fixed and confined locales, i.e. reserves (Ibid.). Thirdly, 'assimilation', or the final stage in which the aboriginal and settler relationship shifts from 'exteriority' to 'interiority' as native identity is eliminated through the attempted integration and conformity of the indigenous population into the settler polity (Ibid., p.168).

Thereafter, Veracini (2010) offered a more extensive theorisation of what he terms “transfers”, notably drawing upon terminology applied by Palestinian scholar Nur Masalha with reference to Zionist strategy to “transfer” Palestinians from their land (1992; 1997). By presenting twenty six forms of “transfer” -that importantly, largely lie within the three stage spectrum proposed by Wolfe- it is possible to far more critically assess settler colonial strategies across a full range of case studies. Importantly, the modes of “transfer” are not mutually exclusive, are often deployed at different times, and with certain types complementary to others.

While in particular settler colonial contexts, such as Lowman and Barker’s study of Canada, the historic and ongoing pervasiveness of settler invasion is classified under alternative terminologies (2015). In this case they focus on invasion through ‘space’ that removes the indigenous population to be replaced by the settler, ‘systems’ that run through society, the economy and politics that seek to both disenfranchise and assimilate natives, and ‘stories’ that settlers adopt as narratives that validate their presence and even glorify their acts (p.31-34).

For this thesis, the forms of “transfer” proposed by Veracini that I will draw upon include ‘Administrative Transfer’, ‘Diplomatic Transfer’, ‘Non-Diplomatic Transfer’ and ‘Transfer of Settlers’. I will, comment on them further throughout this chapter and in the empirical case studies. First, however, it is necessary to more critically consider the applicability of the settler colonial framework to Zionism, and its impact on Palestine.

SECTION TWO: SETTLER COLONIALISM IN PALESTINE

The use of the settler colonial paradigm to explain the Zionist project in Palestine can be traced to the late 1960s. Most notably, is the seminal publication by Sayigh (1965), followed by Jabbour (1970) and Rodinson (1973). While Zureik, later focused more specifically on Zionism’s impact on the Palestinian Citizens of Israel (1979). There was, thereafter, a hiatus until approximately ten years ago. This partly reflects the changing dynamics on the ground, most notably, the implications of the Oslo ‘peace process’ since the early 1990s that prioritised concepts such as ‘state building’ and ‘conflict resolution’. As a result, literature

increasingly accommodated these trends while commentary calling for national liberation against Zionist settler colonialism featured less (Salamanca et al. 2012; Farsakh 2016; Hawari 2018a).

However, as the 'peace process' continued to fail and the plight of the Palestinians remained, it became increasingly difficult to contend that such alternative paradigms were adequate to explain, let alone resolve, the 'conflict'. The 'persistence' of the Palestinian Question called upon further analysis that identified the paramount role of Zionism as a settler colonial project (Massad 2006), while the intractability of ongoing Israeli land dispossession and the stripping of Palestinian rights, was more effectively explained by a settler colonial informed 'logic of elimination'. The 2012 edition of the *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies* dedicated to the case of Palestine brought this issue to the forefront, and laid the foundation for a range of studies that were, thereafter, grounded in settler colonial theory.

Interestingly, the notion of equating Zionism to settler colonialism is far less contentious when exploring early rhetoric and policy of Zionist expansion. This includes the notable statement by the founder of Zionism Theodor Herzl that deftly pointed to Zionism's early known predicament of needing to claim an already inhabited land: "if I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct" (1896). Yet today, an assertion of settler colonialism, though increasingly recognised in academic and activist circles, is considered as anathema and draws accusations of anti-semitism (Busbridge 2017, p.98). This is partly because settler colonialism challenges the image that Israel and its protagonists are committed to presenting: for example, it undermines narratives such as Zionism being a just response to European anti-semitism, that it is the national liberation of the Jewish people who simply seek their rightful 'return', or that Israel is a liberal democracy that accordingly respects the values of all whom the state governs – including its non-citizens in the oPt (Veracini 2006; Pappé 2012; 2017).

Of course Zionism displays unique features, for example, the pre-eminent but largely manipulated role of religion and the Jewish community's divine right of return, the transnational source of its settler population, and Zionism's unique

relationship with its Western imperial backers (Abdo and Yuval-Davis 1995; Dana and Jarbawi 2017; Wolfe 2012; 2016; Elkins and Pederson 2005). While the notion that Israel is a 'State of Exception', and thus able to, for example, loosely and irregularly apply the law (both domestic and international) as a safeguard to its heightened security threats, is peddled by those seeking to both remove Israel from global comparison and accountability when the state acts outside of its, supposedly, otherwise, 'normality' (Lloyd 2012). But as Piterberg (2008) rightly states, every settler colonial project has claimed its exceptionality, and these Zionist nuances do not discount the ability to frame Zionism as a settler colonial project. Indeed, Lloyd (2008) contests that many Zionist 'contradictions', specifically as a professed 'State of Exception', are what make it an 'exemplary' case of settler colonialism. Zionism thus highlights the versatility of settler colonialism, rather than negates its applicability (Wolfe 2012).

Indeed, a further look at early Zionist narratives and strategies prove insightful to understanding Israel's settler colonial project thereafter. Notably, is the founding myth of "a land without people, for a people without land" that once formed -and arguably, to some continues to form- the cornerstone of Zionism also points to a common settler colonial narrative of settlement on an empty or virgin land (*terra nullius*) (Elkins and Pedersen 2005 p.2; see also Khalidi 1997; Pappé 2017). Even when an indigenous population was recognised, they could be discounted in view of their supposed 'backwardness' and incomparable 'civilised values' that rendered them inadequate to claim and manage the land (Lloyd 2012, p.68) - exemplified by the Zionist narrative that only through Jewish settlement was it possible to "*make the desert bloom*". This ties to Pappé's assertion that an integral feature that justifies the acts of the settler polity is its ability and willingness to not only 'eliminate', but also to 'dehumanise', the native (2017 p.145). While the necessity to replace natives was clear with the early Zionist desire to establish 'Jewish colonies' at the expense of Palestinian villages and urban neighbourhoods (Benvenisti 2002, p.263, as cited in Lentin 2017).

The consistent 'dispensability' of the native population is also exemplified by Zionism's early advocacy of a racial hierarchy that has, to date, informed a policy of ethnic exclusion and racism. Sayigh identified early on how racism formed a key facet of Zionist ideology that manifested in racial segregation, racial

exclusiveness and racial supremacy – thus forestalling possibilities of integration or assimilation (1989, p.214-15). Pappé cites “ethnic purity” as both integral to Zionist ideology but also a feature that differentiates Israel from other settler colonial cases (e.g. Australia) where -at least formerly- racist laws and policies have been removed, whereas in today’s Israel, such laws are openly promulgated (2012, p.40-41). Wolfe commented how Zionism’s guiding principal of ethnic exclusivity informed why Israel did not formally annex the Palestinians territories it occupied in 1967. As unlike in 1948 when Israel was able to expel an estimated 750,000 Palestinians, and reluctantly ‘assimilated’ the remaining population as an underclass of Citizens of Israel, in 1967, it had not desire to formally absorb the 1.5 million Palestinians that had remained steadfast (Wolfe 2016, p.247).

A strategy of separation and exclusivity was evident in early Zionist strategy, in particular from the Second Aliyah (1904-1914) onwards, as the ‘conquest of land’ and ‘conquest of labour’ sought to acquire native land and to establish an independent Jewish economy - a method to avoid indigenous integration with the expanding Jewish population. This resulted in the socio-economic marginalisation of Palestinians, as the settler polity sought ascendancy and exclusivity as the dominant social group (Abdo and Yuval-Davis 1995; Hever 2012; Shafir 1989). And it was only a few decades later when Zionist forces implemented its most vehement case of this policy through its ethnic cleansing of Palestinians as part of the 1948 Nakba (Pappé 2006); a key stage in the attempt to ‘extinguish’ the settler colonial project as these events were extensively tied to the formal establishment of the State of Israel. Thereafter, a policy of ‘de-Arabisisation’ and ‘Judaisation’ of territory has remained a consistent facet of Zionist expansion vis-à-vis both the Palestinian population in the oPt and Israel. In the case of Palestinian Citizens of Israel, proposals to ‘transfer’ them into PA jurisdiction, taking their Israeli citizenship, and thereafter Judaizing their land, is still actively pursued by prominent Israeli politicians (Pappé 2011, p.7). Such policies are also apparent in attempts to remove non-Jews from the Naqab, the Northern Galilee and East Jerusalem (Nasasra 2012; 2017; Mansour 2018; Samman 2018).

As such, these various examples point to Zionist policy as a longstanding project to achieve Jewish ascendancy at the cost of indigenous rights, and importantly,

land. This calls for a re-contextualisation of historic, or landmark, events that have contributed towards Palestinian repression and dispossession – yet have often been considered in isolation. Most notably, is the 1948 Nakba, and its disastrous fate for the thousands of Palestinians that were killed, and the thousands more that were forced to leave their home, not to return. But, to justify the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians during this period as the circumstantial outcomes of war is to marginalise the role of pre-planned Zionist policies in earlier decades (Masalha 1992, p.3). A similar logic is applicable to Israel's complete occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. Though in this instance, the Palestinians that remained have continued to impede the scale of 'elimination' Zionists were able to achieve in 1948 in the land that is now Israel. Instead, apartheid informed policies of 'separation' and the fragmentation of Palestinian society into non-contiguous 'bantustans', 'enclaves' or 'ghettos' have allowed for the ongoing colonisation of the remaining Palestinian land in the oPt (Clarno 2017).

By drawing upon Wolfe's notion of "structure and not an event", it is possible to see these seismic moments in Palestinian history as part of a linear and sequential phenomenon – thus, for example, bridging the events of 1948 and 1967 as an integrated settler colonial project (Salamanca et al. 2012; Wolfe 2012). Pappé also highlights how the 'peace process' emerged from the events of 1967 as part of the broader Zionist colonial strategy to continue maximising territorial control, while mitigating any risk to the demographic makeup of the Jewish State (2013, p.341). The Oslo Accords, thereafter, have also institutionalised earlier Zionist policy and allowed for the ongoing colonisation of Palestine, in the pretext of the supposed 'peace process' (Farsakh 2008; Arafah 2017; Hanieh 2016). The settler colonial paradigm highlights the temporal continuity of Zionism and extends the Nakba to the notion of 'al-Nakba al-mustamirra' or the 'ongoing Nakba' as, until today, the dispossession of land and the elimination of Palestinians remains at the forefront of Israeli policy. Moreover, it also reconnects the often espoused split identities and experiences of Palestinians that became citizens of Israel and those in the oPt, as though they have undergone quite different paths, they have a collective settler colonial past, and present, as natives of historic Palestine. This has, importantly, encouraged literature on the ongoing impact of Zionist colonialism on Palestinian Citizens of Israel (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014; 2019; Shihade 2012).

The adoption of settler colonialism has, therefore, opened up a different, or supplementary paradigm, that is now seen across a range of studies that address the 'Palestine Question' from a number of disciplinary approaches. But importantly, this "turn" and "(re) framing" of the conflict towards settler colonialism has helped to remove the exceptionalism that has been applied to Zionism and Palestine (Busbridge 2017). Rather, it places Palestine amongst other more widely recognised cases, such as Canada and the U.S. This shift is powerful as it enables Palestine to garner further global solidarity, as well as explore more context specific liberation strategies -specifically decolonization- instead of the ongoing pursuit of misinformed approaches such as the two-state solution (Ibid. 99-100). Salaita highlights the importance of different indigenous national liberation movements building alliances to challenge their common struggles (2016). Though scholars do also stress that drawing from comparative case studies must not detract from the fact that Palestine, unlike many of its historical precedents, is still an unfinished case of settler colonialism. Rouhana reaffirms this notion in his comparison with North America where settler colonialism has "triumphed" but in Palestine "its outcome is still undetermined" with the ongoing presence and resistance of the native population (2015, p.1). Therefore, as an 'exceptional' case in that Zionism has yet to fully succeed in eliminating the indigenous Palestinian population, the settler colonial framework is, arguably, needed now, more than ever.

And so, it is this thesis' contention that Palestinian GFB exists in a context of Zionist settler colonialism. This then requires a more detailed consideration of particular facets of Zionist policy that contribute towards conditions that lead to the rise of -and continue to sustain- Palestinian GFB, and the spaces where it is most able to manifest. In the first case, I will comment on 'de-development', a structured process to mitigate Palestinian economic development, and by virtue economic and political sovereignty, that this thesis will later show, pushes Palestinian actors into the world of GFB.

SECTION THREE: DE-DEVELOPMENT

3.1. THE INADEQUACY OF ALTERNATIVE PARADIGMS

Since Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, scholars have tried to deploy a range of economic and political theories to critically analyse the seemingly unremitting plight of the Palestinian economy (Abed 1988; Arnon et al. 1997). Yet, consistently, such applications in the case of Palestine have proved inadequate. For example, Arnon et al.'s (1997) attempt to apply Rostow's 'modernisation theory' revealed that Palestine had not been able to pursue a 'classical' development path as it was constrained by Israel's unilaterally imposed conditions designed to stunt Palestinian economic development. While, amongst other reasons, efforts to utilise 'dependency theory' fell short because its conventional logic of 'core' and 'periphery' relations between two sovereign states is not applicable in the case of Israel and Palestine as they essentially share the same -contested- geographical space, and until the 1993 Oslo Accords, were formerly subordinate to the same polity (Sayigh 1986, p.53). And though the economic exploitation of Palestinians has been a consistent by-product of Israeli policy, and thus indicative of 'dependency theory', it has, arguably, never been Israel's overriding objective. In fact, scholars such as Hever highlight the inadequacy of 'exploitation' as a rationale, as contrary to popular belief, he claims that ongoing occupation has in fact become a burden to the Israeli economy as a whole (2010, p.1).

The role of the Palestinians themselves, in particular the policies of the PA and its elite networks of privilege, have also warranted attention. In particular, the extent to which corrupt practices such as clientelism, cronyism, neopatrimonialism and rentierism have impeded local economic development (Amundsen and Ezbidi 2002; Binder 2007; Bouillon 2004; Dana 2014a; 2019; Nasr 2004; Nakhleh 2012). In the wake of the Oslo Accords, a great deal of scholarly attention has also focused on the failure of the Paris Protocol (PER) that was introduced to mediate Israel-Palestine economic relations (Arnon 2007; Arnon and Weinblatt 2001; El-Hayak 2015; Grinberg 2015). In general, argumentation either points to the embedded structural bias of the PER itself, or its failed implementation that ran contrary to the spirit of Oslo. And those that

more optimistically hoped to see solutions to the 'conflict' through various theories of 'economic peace' have, also, found that theory and reality are not consistent in conditions of such asymmetrical power imbalance (IKV 2012). This is particularly apparent when we are, again, not speaking of two clearly defined states, let alone when spatial economic distinctions with regards to Israeli control are largely artificial (Hever 2010, p.2).

There are, of course, key findings to be drawn from these different studies. Most importantly, what they have consistently alluded to in their ultimately insufficient theorisation of Palestinian economic development, is the need to consider the broader political framework when studying Palestine. Indeed, until today, the overriding impact of Palestinian economic development under the conditions of settler colonial informed occupation policy has been marginalised, if not wholly neglected. For example, even the term 'occupation' is meticulously avoided in the economic reports of key multilateral institutions and donors (Wildeman 2018).

As such, even when these institutions identify the challenges faced by the Palestinians, they fail to critically target the root causes. At worse, they normalise the conditions of Israeli occupation as given, and instead promote steps Palestinians can take to mitigate the most negative repercussions (Hanieh 2016). Simultaneously, the affiliated emphasis on economic approaches towards studying the Palestinian economy have consistently left little space for analytical paradigms that consider colonial structures of domination that, instead, highlight the asymmetric power imbalances that have detrimentally governed the Palestinian economy (Farsakh 2008; 2016).

The need for such frameworks has been particularly apparent in recent years with the more concerted adoption of neoliberal informed state building policies and the broader strategy of 'economic peace'. Both of which are notably tied to the PA's 2008 Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) under former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and heavily promoted by the international community. The failure of these policies to contribute towards any genuine and holistic economic or political development in Palestine point to the failures of neoliberalism in general, but particularly when an emphasis on good governance, fiscal adjustments and security, is inappropriately prioritised in a

settler colonial context (Farsakh 2016; Haddad 2016; Khalidi and Samour 2011; Wildeman 2018).

Worryingly, such policies have not only consistently overseen the asymmetric power relations that allow Israel to pre-eminently dictate the Palestinian economy for its own interests, but Israel is routinely considered a 'partner' of Palestinian economic development, to the point that its position is often presented as 'neutral' (Hanieh 2016, p.39). As such, these approaches only perpetuate, normalise and embed Israeli's colonial control (Ibid.). Clarno identifies this problematic mix of settler colonialism and neoliberal racial capitalism as 'neoliberal colonialism' that regularly enriches the Israeli and Palestinian elite, while acquiescing to the detrimental structures that mitigate Palestinian self-determination (2017).

In response, scholars have increasingly sought to highlight the underlying and longstanding structural logic of Israeli policy over the Palestinians. In the process, contesting the comparatively empty -yet seemingly endless- pursuit of, for example, neoliberal state building, in the absence of a plan for national liberation (Tabar and Salamanca 2015; Haddad 2015; Nagarajan 2015). Khalidi and Samour, in particular, highlight the fallacy of pursuing 'statehood', and economic growth and prosperity, without any strategy to resist the principal impediment of genuine Palestinian economic and political development – the 'occupation' (2011, p.8). Such a misguided approach, as the scholars so aptly state, not only conflates "free trade with freedom, house ownership with state building, and an independent bank with political independence", but allows Israel to pronounce ultimately misleading economic indicators in the oPt as signs of the success of its strategy of 'economic peace', further undermining liberation strategies and instead advocating more advanced neoliberalism (Ibid., p.12).

The necessity not to be consumed by the 'myth' of Palestinian development has also been stressed by scholars such as Nakhleh (2012). In particular when policies of 'concession' and 'acquiescence' to continued 'colonial occupation' have enriched the Palestinian political and economic elite, and their Israeli counterparts, in the name of 'development', as part of a supposed -but scarcely identifiable- path towards self-determination (Ibid.,38). Nakhleh thus promotes 'People-Centred Liberationist Development' (PCLD) that speaks to the ongoing

colonial conditions on the ground, as opposed to more conventional, increasingly neoliberal informed, developmental paths. As this thesis argues, it is only through such critical, and colonial, informed frameworks that the Palestinian economy can be truly understood, otherwise, we risk analysing the rise of Palestinian GFB as only a response to an 'event', and not seeing it as a manifestation of settler colonial 'structure'.

3.2. A PATTERN EMERGES

By looking back over Israeli policy towards the Palestinian economy, it is, arguably, difficult to claim a consistent strategy that would allude to an underlying 'structural' logic. Indeed, scholars have presented Israel's often -seemingly-contradictory approaches, especially in the wake of Israel's full occupation of the WBGS in 1967, that have included: selective integration, careful integration, seperationism, and skewed integration (Khalidi and Taghdisi-Rad 2009). In Gordon's seminal work on Israeli policy towards the oPt he contested that the means in which Israel controlled Palestinians was informed by its varied adoption and prioritisation of Foucault's different 'modes of power': specifically, disciplinary, bio-, and sovereign (Gordon 2008a, p.11-15). This resulted in moments when the livelihoods of Palestinians were seemingly prioritised, such as in the early phases of Israeli occupation, to more recent coercive measures that have completely undermined socio-economic stability. Latterly, heavily in response to Israel's unilaterally imposed 'separation' aided by its ability to 'outsource' the occupation to the PA and the international community (Gordon 2008b). Indeed, how Israel regulates the role of the international community, such as its dissemination of aid, is a particular paradox, going from actively encouraging it so as to relieve its own responsibilities for the Palestinians, to impeding its very provision (Hever 2010, p.7).

Yet, upon closer inspection, it is possible to identify consistency, even if the approach has varied. Specifically, the ongoing dispossession of Palestinian land and their rights, as part of a broader policy to mitigate Palestinian economic, and by virtue political, sovereignty and self-determination. Thus, even though prominent Palestinian scholars such as Khalidi and Taghdisi-Rad (2009) stated that there did not appear to be an Israeli economic policy towards the

Palestinians, but instead a policy to ensure ongoing occupation and control of the oPt that manifests in economic strategies, they do allude to a broader Israeli agenda. This necessitates a consideration of more meaningful frameworks to understand Palestinian economic development under politically motivated 'occupation', rooted in Zionist ideology and settler colonial goals. First, I consider the work of Sayigh (1986), whose research, was the precursor to the concept that I believe to be the most useful for this thesis, Roy's notion of 'de-development'.

In Sayigh's seminal publication he stressed that though it was possible to acknowledge certain economic gains in Palestine following Israeli occupation in 1967, it was important to frame it within Israel's overriding policy designed "to suit primarily the interests and priorities of the Israeli economy", while, simultaneously, retarding Palestine's capacity to generate sustainable economic development (Ibid., p.45; see also Farsakh 2013). Sayigh stressed the risk of misinterpreting indicators such as income levels, as though they would hint at improved economic conditions, the reality is that very little income was domestically generated. This was not just a reflection of the enormous rates of Palestinian employment in Israel, but also income derived from overseas Palestinian labour remittances (Ibid., p.50). Importantly, Palestinian labour was forced into such arrangements due to the inability of its domestic economy to generate the appropriate labour absorption capacity. This was due to restrictions on the growth of both the industrial and agricultural sector, often from the challenges in receiving the necessary permits so as to avoid being competitive with the Israeli market, but also due to Israel's progressive appropriation of Palestinian land (Shadid 1988, p.133-4). Such conditions are as prevalent today. The absence of credible economic development at the time is aptly explained by the words of the then Israeli Minister of Defense, Yitzhak Rabin:

There will be no development in the occupied territories initiated by the Israeli Government, and no permits will be given expanding agriculture or industry (there), which may compete with the State of Israel (Jerusalem Post, 15 February 1985, cited in Shadid 1988, p.134).

Sayigh's more critical assessment of the supposed benefits to Palestine informed his view that rather than a conventional 'dependency' relationship, or one with

mutually beneficial outcomes associated to economic 'interdependence', the Palestinian economy had in fact been 'pauperised' and progressively lacked the capacity to pursue independent and sustainable economic development (1986, p.58-63). Sayigh's findings that the economies of the occupied territories were "twisted, distorted, and stunted, basically not through the working of the "invisible hand" of market forces, but through imposition by the visible hand of the occupying power", therefore, presented a key issue (Ibid., p.53). That is the need not only to be conscious of the broader political structure that governs Palestine, but how this structure has a specific intention to impede development, both economic and political. Such a perception formed the basis upon which Sara Roy developed the concept of 'de-development'.

3.3. DE-DEVELOPMENT DEFINED

In Roy's landmark study of the Gaza Strip she also attempted to draw from conventional development theories, including 'modernisation theory' and 'dependency theory' (1995, p.118-119). Modernisation theory she felt most closely matched the Israeli narrative that promulgated the notion that Palestine had benefitted from its interactions with the Israeli economy, evident by the higher incomes and improved standards of living; exemplified by the increased material possessions of Gazans (1987, p.57). Dependency theory, Roy argued was, by comparison, more appropriate, as it highlighted the overriding reliance on the Israeli economy as a source of employment opportunities and a market for Palestinian exports, both fundamental to the economic growth experienced in the 1970-80s. Yet, neither theory, adequately acknowledged the more repressive and debilitating characteristics of Israeli policy, and specifically, the broader political paradigm from which such policy derived.

Most significantly was her contention that Israel's colonial project shaped a policy over the Palestinians that was not driven primarily for economic gain (as dependency or classical colonial theory would propose) - though not to say that there was not significant economic advantage to be gained by its policy- but rather, by political motives, and the overriding Zionist ambition of extending Israeli sovereignty over the Palestinian people and their land (1995, p.117). Roy claimed that Israeli policy did not seek just to repress the economic capability of the

Palestinians, but it was a tool to suppress broader Palestinian nationalism by weakening the foundations upon which a viable economy, and ultimately a state could be founded (Ibid.). Israeli policy, therefore, did not restrain Gaza to a state of 'underdevelopment', as dependency theory would contend, but rather, a policy Roy characterised as 'de-development'.

Roy describes de-development in Palestine as "the deliberate, systematic deconstruction of an indigenous economy by a dominant power" (1995, p.4). And contrary to a status of underdevelopment which "allow (s) for a structural change and reform in the weaker economy", de-development "not only distorts the development process but undermines it entirely" (1999, p.5). Importantly, as with Sayigh's notion of 'pauperisation', a core tenet of 'de-development' is the need to look beyond macro indicators and the higher Palestinian incomes characteristic of the 1970-80s as the principle determinants in judging the state of the Palestinian economy, and the lives of the Palestinians more broadly. Roy specifically highlighted that positive GNP figures and associated purchasing capacity were not mutually exclusive to 'de-development', as they do not necessarily reflect the potential for long-term sustainable economic development, least of all one that is indigenously driven; evident by the diminishing contribution towards GDP by productive sectors such as industry and agriculture (1987, p.62-73).

Roy argued that Israeli policy pursued these goals through three core mechanisms: 'expropriation and dispossession', 'integration and externalization', and 'deinstitutionalization'. Expropriation and dispossession consisted of policies that diminished the access of Gazans to resources necessary for development, most notably water and land. Integration and externalisation referred to a process of forced interaction and dependency on external sources for growth, in particular the overreliance on Israel as a place of employment opportunities and as a trading partner. Deinstitutionalization reflected policies that restricted the development of key institutions necessary for the establishment, implementation and protection of economic development independent of Israeli interference, and that primarily served the interests of the Palestinians. In total, these policies were designed to tie Gaza to the Israeli state in a form of skewed dependency that stunted Palestine's own capacity to achieve sustainable development.

Roy did not introduce this concept at a time when settler colonial scholarship on Palestine was particularly prevalent, but did identify the necessity to consider this paradigm when considering 'de-development' (1995, p.124). As such, it is, arguably, the most holistic prism through which to look at Israeli policy over the Palestinian economy – in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank- and so has frequently been referenced by notable scholars (Taghdisi-Rad 2010, Turner and Shweiki 2014, Farsakh 2016, Hanieh 2016). Indeed, even though the conditions on the ground have notably changed since the concept was first introduced, its application is still as relevant today. For example, in response to Israel's heightened enforcement of 'closure' policy in the immediate years following the Oslo Accords, Roy contended that de-development had in fact accelerated (1999). And importantly, that which distinguishes ongoing Israeli policy from the past is "scale" and not "structure" (2004, p.366). More recently, Roy argued that 'de-development' had reached its logical conclusion (Roy 2014, p.x). This is particularly the case in Gaza where any semblance of economic development is scarcely identifiable, to the extent that the UN claimed that it might be 'uninhabitable' by 2020 (UNCTAD 2015). But also in Palestine more broadly, where the now extensive reliance on donor aid and the absence of domestic productive capacity render sustainable development unfeasible (Roy 2014, p.x).

Interestingly, though 'occupation' or 'settler colonialism' are absent in the language of multilateral institutions when reporting on Palestine, they have started to use the term 'de-development' (UNCTAD 2015; 2017). The concept has also been adopted in other country case studies (Meurs and Ranasinghe 2003; De Santisteban 2005). In literature on Palestine, it has now also been applied to the challenges of Palestinian economic development in not only the oPt, but also to Palestinians in Israel and even the diaspora (Shehadeh and Khalidi 2014; Gassner 2014). Nevertheless, it is important to remain conscious of how, and when, the term should be used. For example, even though Khalidi stressed that sustained growth and the necessary structural transformations of the Palestinian economy are scarcely possible under ongoing occupation and colonialism, it cannot be denied that in recent decades the West Bank has experienced growth and even improved macro indicators (2019, p.118).

This is particularly important to note when speaking of Palestine as a whole, because though Gaza can be more readily be described as ‘de-developed’, it is more contentious to claim the same of the West Bank. This, I believe, however, does not mitigate its validity as an analytical framework for this thesis, as it does not refute that Israeli policy in the West Bank is informed by a structural logic of de-development. And it is such a logic, as this thesis will show, that has pre-eminently contributed towards the rise of the GFB economy. But, before proceeding to the empirical chapters, it is now necessary to consider another dimension of Zionist colonialism’s influence on Palestinian GFB – the spaces in which it is able to manifest due to ‘deterritorialisation’.

SECTION FOUR: DETERRITORIALISATION

4.1. DETERRITORIALISATION IN CONTEXT

The concept of deterritorialisation was initially popularised by Deleuze and Guattari in their seminal publication *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Though extensively grounded in complex philosophical and psychoanalytical thought, it provided the bedrock upon which a concept denoting the severance (both physical and non-physical) of, for example, people and practices from a particular territorial space was established. Thereafter, the term has been adopted across a range of disciplinary fields to represent quite disparate phenomenon (Popescu 2010). In line with the broad theme of this thesis, it was most notably applied in response to an age of heightened globalisation throughout 1990s scholarship, whereby ‘deterritorialisation’ was seen to represent the reorganisation of spatial power to one principally based on network and not territory, in so doing, contesting the traditionally influential roles of borders and boundaries (Appadurai 1996; Castells 1996; Scholte 1996).

While such an understanding of deterritorialisation offers certain explanatory powers for Palestinian GFB, it is, nevertheless, problematic, as a foundational tenet to this interpretation of deterritorialisation is the diminished role of borders. Specifically, and without exploring the enormous field of border studies, it is generally argued that ‘borders’ represent the delineation of two separate sovereign nations (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Wilson and Donna 1998; Donnan and

Wilson 1999). In the case of Israel, as an ongoing settler colonial project, it has never formally stated its final 'borders' so as to allow for the further colonisation of Palestinian land (Falah 2005). As such, deterritorialisation in the context of globalisation is quite removed from a concept of forced land dispossession and affiliated settler colonial practices that seek to eliminate a place of its indigenous population, thereafter 'reterritorialised' by a new settler polity. This section, therefore, seeks to present a concept of 'deterritorialisation' that can more broadly be applied to a settler colonial context. But also, one that is specifically useful in explaining the type of GFB that exists in Palestine.

As a point of departure, and similarly to the interpretation of deterritorialisation promulgated in response to a state of accelerated globalisation, I consider deterritorialisation as a process in which the governing capacities of a political authority are mitigated, in both time and space, in the territories over which they are formally supposed to hold jurisdiction. However, in Palestine, this is not primarily the result of the 'end of geography' or an increasingly 'borderless' world that has challenged the 'fixed spatial configurations' characteristic of the nation state (Brenner 1999; O'Brien 1992; Ohmae 1990). But rather, it is structurally manifested in response to Israeli policy that neither respects its internationally promoted 'borders' with Palestine (Green Line) nor the PA's supposed sovereignty throughout various spaces of the oPt. As a result, it is Israel that deterritorialises PA governance, at any moment, and even indefinitely, so as to ensure its full control over Palestinians, and their land. In Palestine-Israel, it is, therefore, more useful not to think of 'borders' in their conventional form, but rather, as an unfixed settler colonial frontier that is permeable to the influences of an outside sovereign -colonial- power (Veracini 2010; Weaver 1999; Wolfe 2006). Or as Sa'dil states, colonial borders are 'temporal' and 'soft' until the point of decolonization when they become 'hardened' (2010, p.49).

4.2. DETERRITORIALISATION AS APPLIED TO PALESTINE

I adopt this interpretation based heavily on the work of Natsheh and Parizot (2015) who critically explored the challenges faced by the PA in exerting its control across the West Bank, with specific reference to the areas in and around the city of Hebron. Of particular use to this thesis, they stressed the implications

of such restrictions on the Palestinian trade sector and how it aided the proliferation of illegal commercial practices and the empowering of 'informal entrepreneurs'. Importantly, though they specifically used the term deterritorialisation, what they observed can be seen across a range of literature dealing with PA governance in the oPt.

Natsheh and Parizot's interpretation of 'deterritorialisation' built upon the extensive commentary on the impact of divergent Israeli policy on the civilian lives of both Palestinians and Israeli's in the oPt. Of particular focus has been the effect of mobility on Palestinians whom are regularly withheld from traveling to, or through, certain spaces – a process greatly aided by biopolitical forms of control including travel permits and ID cards (Abu Zhara 2013; Parsons and Salter 2008). Simultaneously, a Palestinian's experience of time is manipulated by Israel and is often 'depleted' due to the range of daily obstacles they must face, for example, extensive delays at checkpoints (Samman 2018). While an Israeli's time is 'conserved' through more streamlined procedures, or lack of, and even infrastructural design (Ibid.). Such contrasts are heightened in the oPt where an Israeli is privileged by a combination of, amongst others, settler bypass roads, fully serviced settlements and Israeli civilian law. Handel presents these challenges as part of a 'geography of disaster' created by Israel to control Palestinians so as to avoid, for example, organisation and resistance (2009, p.193-4). But simultaneously creating disorder through its mitigation of their everyday life. Halper points to an Israeli governed 'matrix of control' that structurally forced the subjugation of Palestinians while attempting to normalise the occupation (2005; 2015). The mere architecture of the occupation was the focus of Weizmann's *Hollow Land*, and how it reinforced asymmetrical relations of Israeli dominance, such as through the immense tools of surveillance built into Israel's infrastructural control of the oPt (2007).

It is under such conditions that Natsheh and Parizot encouraged analysis of the impact of Israeli policy on not just civilians but the governing capacities of the main authorities in the oPt, specifically the PA and Israel. In particular, how variations in their relation to time and space either mitigated or strengthened their ability to exert control in the territories designated for their management. What Natsheh and Parizot presented in the case of the PA was a frequently

heightened, but near perennial status of deterritorialisation, whereby the PA was predominantly absent as a governing authority due to its regular inability to even physically access the spaces in which it supposedly held jurisdiction, while the Israeli authorities were unchallenged in their control across all parts of the West Bank (2015, p.110-116).

Such disparities in the capacity to govern are particularly complexed by the geographically fragmented makeup of the West Bank, in particular its subdivision into Areas A, B, and C, and more recently as a result of the Separation Wall. The former, a case of divergent PA governing capacities from, supposedly, full administrative and security control in Area A, to the complete opposite in Area C that constitutes the majority of the West Bank. The latter, a physical impediment that had by 2013, located approximately 11,000 Palestinians on the Israeli side of the wall but Palestinian side of the Green Line in the Seam Zone (UN OCHA 2013). The consequent range of contrasting 'regulatory frameworks' or 'administrative regimes' that different Palestinians must navigate as a result of such territorial divisions and the Separation Wall particularly highlights the non-homogenous experience of PA governance throughout the oPt (Naamneh et al. 2018; Veracini 2006). While such spaces where Palestinians are able to reside are more commonly considered 'ghettos' or 'bantustans' with, at best, semi-autonomy (McColl and Newman 1992; Farsakh 2005; Clarno 2017). Hanafi, argues that a policy of 'spacio-cide' informs an Israeli strategy to both transform Palestinian territory into 'mere land' and to encourage the voluntary 'transfer' of Palestinians, while simultaneously undermining the governing capacity of any Palestinian political authority through the fragmentation of the oPt into different territorial spaces of control (2012, p.193).

4.3. DETERRITORIALISATION AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Importantly, what Natsheh and Parizot pointed to was not only the disparity in Palestinian and Israeli territorial regimes across the West Bank but how the two were intricately tied under the preeminent control of the Israeli authorities. Thus further validating the need to consider the area of the State of Israel and the oPt as fundamentally one state, and not two separate political, let alone sovereign entities (Hever 2010). It is here, where I contend that Natsheh and Parizot's use

of deterritorialisation needs to be further contextualised, specifically, by considering how the undermining of a non-settler governing body is informed by settler colonial logic. This helps to explain how the deterritorialisation as presented by them has been allowed to manifest, but also, why it is a necessary facet of Zionist strategy.

I draw primarily upon three of Veracini's forms of 'transfer' for explanatory power of such deterritorialisation: Administrative, Diplomatic and Non-Diplomatic Transfer (Veracini 2010, p.44-45). The first is when the administrative borders are reconfigured under the direction of the settler polity, resulting in the rights of the indigenous population being transferred, and not their physical displacement. The second entails a part of the settler controlled territory being provided to the indigenous population, and subsequent responsibility ceded to a sovereign or semi-sovereign entity. The third similarly involves the provision of territory, but without any credible relinquishing of control from the settler body politic. These three forms of 'transfer' are, to a certain degree, contradictory, yet, I propose that upon a closer inspection of the realities on the ground it is possible to identify where they overlap in the case of Palestine. But first, it is worth considering other argumentation regarding the inadequacies of the PA as a governing body.

In recent years, scholars have focused on PA corruption and cronyism, often exacerbated under the conditions of heightened neoliberal informed policymaking (Nakhleh 2012; Haddad 2016; Dana 2014a; 2019). The preeminent role of external players beyond Israel, including, but not limited to, multilateral institutions and NGOs, has also shown that the fate of Palestinians is dictated far from local authorities – predominantly to the effect of further entrenching policies that mitigate a just solution to the conflict (Farsakh 2008; Haddad 2016; Hanieh 2016; Shikaki and Springer 2015; Wildeman and Tartir 2014; Wildeman 2018). But, most commonly, is the proposition that the PA is simply a 'subcontractor' to whom Israeli interests and administrative responsibilities vis-a-vis the Palestinians have been 'outsourced' (Amichai 2016; Gordon 2008a; 2008b). This primarily refers to the PA's role as a 'security' partner to Israel and is indicative of the inflated size of the Palestinian security forces whom are argued to regularly prioritise the safety of Israel and the survival of the PA more than the protection of Palestinians (Amrov and Tartir 2014; Tartir 2018; Clarno 2016). This has been

evident with not only President Abbas's 2014 claim of the sanctity of security coordination but also the ever more extensive and violent crackdowns on Palestinian civil society – led by the PA (Human Rights Watch 2018; Hawari 2018b). As such, Marshall contests that Palestinians increasingly live under 'two occupations', the Israeli and the PA (2011).

But, even with all the failings of the PA, by taking settler colonialism as a point of departure it is possible to recognise that the PA was neither destined, nor designed, to be a legitimate governing authority. But rather, at best, a semi-sovereign entity as a façade to ongoing Israeli domination and the institutionalised normalisation of the occupation. This is evident from the PA's very establishment as part of the Oslo Accords, as in addition to its prerequisite prioritisation of Israeli security concerns, it was primarily empowered with a range of administrative responsibilities, for example, local tax collection, yet no credible sovereign powers such as the control over Palestinian borders (Farsakh 2008; Hammami and Tamari 2001). In fact, what transpired, thereafter, was primarily a transfer of certain 'responsibilities' rather than 'management' that was firmly kept in the control of Israel (Amir 2012, p.228). Gordon presented this 'outsourcing' of the occupation as 'occupation via remote control' that primarily reflected a "reorganisation of power rather than its (Israel's) withdrawal" (2008a; 2008b, p.35).

Indeed, the establishment of the PA was -and continues to be- critical to an Israeli policy to cede its day to day accountability of the Palestinian population while being able to heighten its security-oriented form of domination (Azoulay and Ophir 2008, p.169). Such a reconfiguration from an initially 'colonial' principle to one of 'separation' since Oslo has freed Israel to conduct more violent and repressive measures while still enabling its ongoing capacity to exploit and dispossess Palestinian natural resources (Gordon 2008b, p, 34-39). Amir highlights that the inadequacy of the PA is particularly reflected in its inability to control Palestinian movement, as by drawing upon Foucauldian principles of 'governmentality' as integral features of sovereignty, it is clear that the PA has neither any genuine authority over its population, but also its very capacity to establish any degree of political independence going forward is perennially undermined (2012).

As such, the PA is not only an example of 'void sovereignty' but represents a seemingly contradictory phenomenon whereby its existence as a sovereign power is, in fact, fabricated as an essential feature of a wider policy of ensuring sustained and overarching Israeli control (Ibid.). As a result, the PA's governance of the oPt cannot be deemed as akin to a principle of 'impenetrability' as would be characterised by a sovereign power with control of its, for example, borders (Hertz 1976, p.100). But rather, its spatial authority is wholly penetrable to other sovereignties, specifically Israel (Amir 2012). Such conditions, render PA rule as largely performative and often a case of 'theatrical statecraft' (Pace and Sen 2019).

As such, the formation of the PA and the affiliated ceding of the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories point to a case of Diplomatic Transfer, and is, arguably, how the Oslo Accords sought to portray the 'peace process' as a key step towards Palestinian self-determination. But, in fact, it is likely more appropriate to consider these modifications as akin to Administrative Transfer, whereby the provision of a degree of autonomy, but not sovereignty, was designed primarily to enable the continued pervasiveness of Israeli settler colonial policy. Yet, when looking more broadly to the realities of the oPt, it is also possible to incorporate -to varying degrees- the notion of Non-Diplomatic Transfer.

The concept of Non-Diplomatic Transfer has primarily been considered in the context of Israel's supposed disengagement from the Gaza Strip. But, as Falah stressed, one should not conflate 'disengagement' with 'partition', as the latter should involve a certain granting of sovereign powers (2005). Not only did Israel's 'disengagement' provide the cover for further colonisation in the West Bank, but it also enabled the consolidation of what is regularly termed the world's largest open air prison; worryingly, under an alarmingly well received false Israeli pretext of giving land and control back to the Palestinians. In the case of the West Bank, while the PA certainly retains more governing capacities than Israel allows in Gaza, it is clear that ultimate power resides in Israeli hands. The PA's inadequacy to enact any semblance of authority in time and space was most evident during the Second Intifada when the majority of the West Bank was put on military lock down – resulting in catastrophic socio-economic conditions.

Today, the Israeli authorities continue to wield this power through its complex web of both physical, but also increasingly digital and virtual monitoring technologies such as biometric ID cards (Stevens 2011; Nashif 2017). Ongoing Israeli military incursions into key Palestinian controlled cities such as Ramallah further highlight the fallacy of PA control in Area A (Hawari 2019). While the Seam Zone, arguably, presents a notably heightened form of Non-Diplomatic Transfer in the West Bank as the ceding of both territory and governance to the PA is fundamentally relinquished by the physical inability of the PA to access these spaces. Most importantly, the PA's incapacity to enact any degree of sovereign authority, in particular in territorial spaces that have increasingly been presented as either 'disputed' or critical to Israeli 'security' concerns, has allowed for the ongoing dispossession of Palestinian land. This is especially evident in the case of the Separation Wall that is often considered Israeli's de-facto border, but is in fact formally only deemed a security measure, and has been an integral tool as part of a Zionist 'logic of expansion' to further appropriate Palestinian land (Sa'dil 2010, p.52).

The concept of deterritorialisation, as adopted in this thesis, must, therefore, be framed within a settler colonial context. As though Veracini's different forms of 'transfer' do not offer full explanatory power of the challenges of PA governance in the oPt, it is still possible to see deterritorialisation as not a naturally occurring phenomenon, but part of a broader structural control over the Palestinians. Therefore deterritorialisation as witnessed by Natsheh and Parizot, and as will be shown in this thesis, is designed to be possible as an integral facet of allowing preeminent Israeli control. That is, and particularly in the case of the West Bank, a perennial status whereby the PA can at any time be disallowed from both accessing and enacting authority in its supposedly designated territorial jurisdictions. Simultaneously, enabling both the ongoing dispossession of Palestinian land and the delegitimation of the non-settler governing body. While, importantly, creating particular conditions for the proliferation of (il) licit practices of Palestinian GFB to prevail.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the conclusion of the last chapter on GFB literature I noted some key observations that should inform a study of Palestinian GFB. This included: a need to be conscious of varying 'origins of regulatory authority' as trade is conducted in Palestine-Israel; the different ways that those engaged in GFB activity might be defined, and specifically the potential of them playing broader roles than just economic actors; the interdependence between the world of GFB and GFA, with particular reference to how the state governs GFB activity, in both a visible and invisible manner; the political paradigm through which Israel dictates how Palestinian GFB is able to prevail. These considerations provide a useful reference point in this chapter's conclusion as by acknowledging the significance of Zionist settler colonialism we can move towards an adequate framing of Palestinian GFB. Or as Veracini states, we first need to "get the tenses right" (2015, p.268) before trying to unpack the roots of Palestinian GFB, but also, how it has continued to manifest, where it is most likely to prevail, and what are its implications – answers that will be further found in the empirical chapters.

I have shown that since its inception, Zionism has been driven by a settler colonial logic, but also that there are two particular facets of Israeli policy that must be considered in a study of Palestinian GFB: de-development and deterritorialisation. In both cases, a structured set of practices to maintain ongoing Israeli domination while mitigating Palestinian self-determination. The former, a policy to limit sustainable economic development through a combination of expropriation and dispossession, integration and externalisation, and deinstitutionalization. The latter, a strategy to obstruct the capacity of the PA to enact any credible form of governance in the territorial spaces that it supposedly holds jurisdiction. The resultant GFB that arises under such conditions is, therefore, not simply an 'event', but part of the 'structure' of an ongoing settler colonial project.

Such a framing raises important considerations when attempting to merge GFB and settler colonialism. For example, when considering the role of different actors engaged in Palestinian GFB, it is likely true that similar to those found throughout broader GFB literature they are heavily motivated by economic gain, or even

survival, in the absence of viable alternatives. But how might one contextualise, for example, economic survival, when a Palestinian is faced with a 'logic of elimination' and a particular policy of de-development. The act of survival, as this thesis will explore, can range from acquiescence to Israeli policy to actively resisting it by remaining a trader so as to remain steadfast on one's land. In the case of Palestinian GFB our point of departure is, therefore, to consider the potential impact of such traders upon broader political dynamics and not just their economic practices.

Similarly, common sites of GFB worldwide are in the grey spaces of governance, often in borderlands or where the state consciously chooses to turn a blind eye. But what if there is no sovereign entity or when the authority that does supposedly exist is confined in both space and time through a process of deterritorialisation enacted by a separate power, a settler colonial polity? Importantly, how do such dynamics affect a local interpretation of (il) licit practices when the 'origin of regulatory authority' is blurred across multiple visible and invisible 'regulatory frameworks' and 'administrative regimes'? How do such variations heighten the scale of (il) licit behaviour? This is particularly important when considering the different sites across the West Bank that have emerged due to their own unique experience of deterritorialisation.

Palestinian GFB must, therefore, naturally be considered within a framework of heightened globalisation whereby the more fluid passage of goods and people allow for unparalleled levels of international trade. But, at its core, Palestinian GFB must also be understood as a response to Israeli settler colonialism; a particular interdependence of GFB and GFA where GFA is represented by the actors and motivations of a settler polity. And so, in addition to the effect of GFB more broadly on the Palestinian economy, arguably, a more critical set of repercussions are the extent to which Palestinian GFB challenges or even reinforces Israel's settler colonial project. Such an inquiry cannot be explained by trade figures but by a study of the socio-economic and political trajectories of those most actively engaged in Palestinian GFB, as I will explore in the empirical chapters.

As a point of departure it is first necessary to consider the rise of Palestinian GFB

as a result of both the greater capacity for Palestinians to engage in international commerce in the post-Oslo Accord era, but also, and crucially, in response to an Israeli policy of de-development. Specifically, how in the context of de-development, GFB can be considered -by both Palestinians and Israel- as the Safe Zone of Palestinian economic activity, or a space “to breathe” in the face of a logic of elimination.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE RISE OF THE 'SAFE ZONE' - PALESTINIAN GLOBALISATION FROM BELOW

INTRODUCTION

In *Chapter One* and *Two* I highlighted some of the reasons why the Palestinian trade economy -specifically China-Palestine commerce- must be studied from 'below'. In this chapter I will provide an overview of the rise of the Palestinian GFB economy and examine why it is considered by Palestinians and the Israeli authorities as the Safe Zone of economic activity. Or as traders often shared with me, it is the main opportunity that Israel allows them "to breathe"!

The principal contention of this chapter, and the broader thesis, is that GFB activity should be considered as part of a structured and perennial Israeli occupation policy whereby Palestinian economic development should neither notably contest the Israeli economy nor contribute towards sustainable and long-term Palestinian economic, and by virtue political, sovereignty. Under such conditions, for many Palestinians their principal avenue for economic prosperity, and often survival, has increasingly been limited to GFB activity in the absence of viable alternatives following decades of de-development. While for Israel, its preeminent capacity to -at any moment- impede the sustainable functioning of the Palestinian trade sector, means that it can encourage, or even coerce, more favourable behaviours so as not to challenge its settler colonial project.

It is important to note that such analysis builds upon decades of similar policies enacted against the Palestinian people. This includes from early settler colonial expansion in Palestine when it was believed that by offering the indigenous population economic gain that they would be more receptive to the Zionist enterprise (Lloyd 2012, p.70). Such a strategy was, thereafter, particularly pursued following Israel's full occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 of which the early years were defined by a policy of 'invisible occupation' that entailed programmes to support a respectable standard of living reflective primarily of purchasing capacity, yet consistently undermining any genuine economic and political sovereignty (Gordon 2008a). Similarly, at times of heightened violence and instability such as the First Intifada Israel was conscious

to balance policies that did not cause such economic hardship that Palestinians had nothing to lose and so were more willing to resist, but at the same time keeping them locked to their dependence on Israel (Khalidi and Taghdisi-Rad 2009 p.5-16; see also UNCTAD 1989). In recent years, this logic of economic pacification is increasingly tied to the broader policy of 'economic peace' that has done little to advance Palestinian self-determination (Dana 2015a; Clarno 2017), but has instead sought to "pacify and ultimately extinguish Palestinian political demands and aspirations through limited economic gains" (Roy 2014, p.xi). The extensive adoption of the affiliated neoliberal informed policies to achieve Palestinian economic development have also been critiqued for their contribution towards individual self-interest at the cost of collective political struggle necessary to challenge Israeli domination (Hanieh 2016).

The analysis of this chapter, therefore, provides an important context for the latter empirical studies that will further address the broader political implications of the Safe Zone. The focus here is the history and policies related to the rise of this critical avenue of Palestinian economic survival. I will consistently parallel this analysis with the various trends in China-Palestine trade -contrary to the theme of this thesis, this requires acknowledgement of 'formal' data, but for primarily indicative purposes- as such commerce provides relevant examples of how the Palestinian economy became progressively globalised, but also increasingly dependent and influenced by Chinese imports. This chapter will address this in the following way:

Section One touches upon China-Palestine trade pre-PER and includes a short overview of the Palestinian economy more broadly pre-PER. *Section Two* considers the growth of China-Palestine trade in the years following the PER. *Section Three* focuses on the domestic Palestinian conditions since the early 2000s and how this period saw the re-orientation of the Palestinian economy towards the Safe Zone. *Section Four* shows how the consumption that drives Palestinian GFB is either unsustainable or out of Palestinian control, but invariably dictated by Israeli occupation policy. *Section Five* draws together the findings of the chapter and positions the reader for the subsequent analysis of how the Safe Zone manifests at different empirical case study sites.

SECTION ONE:PALESTINIAN TRADE PRE-PARIS PROTOCOL - THE FIRST SIGNS OF PALESTINIAN GFB

The focus of this thesis is the period when Palestine could import directly from China following the signing of the 1994 Paris Protocol (PER). It is, however, important to recognise that though formal statistics regarding Chinese imports to Palestine have only existed since 1996, Chinese goods had entered the Palestinian market place from as early as the 1970s, if not before. The value and quantity of this trade was unlikely to be significant as China only begun to develop notable export relations with the Middle East in general from the mid to late 1980s (Harris 1993, p.198), at this time the Israeli and Palestinian market represented limited commercial opportunities. But a brief review of this period serves as a valuable entry point to the post-PER analysis, because even in the pre-PER period an understanding of the Palestinian imports sector can –as today- only be fully evaluated through a ‘bottom up’ perspective and within the broader context of Israeli policy over Palestine. Knowing the true value of trade was not only inhibited by the absence of formal statistics, but was also masked by the Palestinian need to import ‘indirectly’ through Israel, and the intentional ‘mislabelling’ of Chinese goods. It is, therefore, important to first understand the context of the Palestinian economy in the decades preceding the PER.

1.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following the June 1967 Six Day War and Israel’s subsequent military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza there was extensive debate over the economic policy Israel should apply to the recently occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) (Arnon 2007, p.574). Fundamentally, a discussion as to the extent to which Israel should integrate or detach the oPt from the Israeli economy. Though the maintenance of a labour border and elimination of a trade border were advocated, the prevailing policy was to enable a comparatively free movement of Palestinian labour into Israel and a relaxed economic border enabling two-way trade - with exceptions that consistently favoured the Israeli economy, such as restrictions on many Palestinian agricultural products to protect the Israeli agricultural sector (Kanafani 2001, p.276). This policy was supported by then Defense Minister Moshe Dayan who believed that a policy to ‘integrate without annexing’ would pacify Palestinian

resistance through economic development while enabling Israel to maintain its presence in the oPt (Arnon 2007, p.580). The goal was for Israel to achieve an 'invisible occupation' whereby Palestinian standards of living might be improved, but without contributing towards broader economic and political independence, and by virtue sovereignty (Gordon 2008a, p.48-69).

The adopted economic regime was formerly presented as akin to a 'customs union' as Israel and the oPt were enveloped into one economic territory with Palestine's economic relations with Egypt and Jordan closed off under Israeli control; with limited opportunities made possible by the 'Open Bridges' programme to facilitate Palestinian exports via the Jordan River Bridges (Taghdisi-Rad 2014, p.16).¹⁷ However, the asymmetric nature of this economic union, for example, Israel's complete control over trade policy, taxation, financial institutions and services, in addition to measures that consistently impeded the development of Palestinian industry while protecting the competitiveness of Israeli goods and services, meant that the Palestinians were de facto subject to an 'imposed economic integration' (Arnon and Weinblatt 2001, p.292).

The effects on the Palestinians were immediate with a rapidly growing dependency on the Israeli economy as a source of imports and a market for its limited exports, resulting in a sizeable trade deficit that has continued to this day (Elmusa and El-Jaafari 1995, p.17): by the mid-80s Israel was the source of 90% of Palestinian imports and 75% of its exports (Findler 1998, p.158). During this period, all imports to both Israel and Palestine were essentially registered as Israeli trade, with affiliated customs revenues assigned to the Israeli treasury (Kanafani 2001, p.277). The main redeeming factor was the employment opportunities and higher salaries available in Israel; though the long-term repercussions of this policy were consistently highlighted by scholars such as Roy who contended that dependence on Israel would impede sustainable domestic economic development (1995; 2004). Moreover, as will be shown in *Section Two*, any cessation of such opportunities could have a devastating effect.

¹⁷ Due to formal and informal obstacles the Palestinian export sector experienced limited benefit, but rather the initiative became an avenue for Israeli goods to be exported as goods of the oPt so as to avoid the Arab Boycott that Israel was facing at the time.

Under such conditions it was virtually impossible for Palestinians to be granted import and export licenses; only a select few had this privilege and it was inconceivable without strong connections to the Israeli government or private sector – often requiring political collaboration with Israel (Hanieh 2013, p.104). As a result, the majority of Palestinian traders relied heavily on Israeli wholesalers to purchase their goods for reselling in the Palestinian market place or were themselves agents for Israeli suppliers (Samara 2000, p.22). This gave Israeli traders significant leverage over Palestinians who struggled to contract with foreign agents, let alone source directly from overseas manufacturers. By having to go through an Israeli intermediary Palestinian traders could be charged at least 30% more for their imported goods than if they had been able to do it independently (Trader Interview, Hebron, Oct. 2017). Interestingly, this mutual dependence often forged longstanding business ties between Israeli and Palestinian traders. For example, Palestinian traders would on occasion travel overseas with their Israeli suppliers to select goods that they would then request their Israeli partner to import for them (Field notes, 2018).

Importantly, this period was also at the height of the Arab Boycott that had been in place -to varying degrees- since 1948, and when Israel was still struggling to gain diplomatic recognition with key potential future political and economic allies, such as China. Nevertheless, trade with such countries often existed during this period even though it was neither formerly recognised nor recorded. By exploring this trade from 'below' -i.e. through the experience of the traders who were engaged in it- it is possible to see that a Palestinian GFB economy, and specifically China-Palestine trade, had emerged from much earlier than the PER.

1.2. CHINA-PALESTINE TRADE PRE-PER

The Arab Boycott had formally isolated Israel -and unfortunately by default Palestine- from its neighbouring Arab markets while a secondary boycott challenged Israel's ability to do business with many non-Arab states across the world; for example, Palestinian exports to neighbouring Jordan were restricted if they contained Israeli input (Mansour 1988, p.90). This left Israel dependent on trade with recognised partners that were predominantly in Europe and the US. It is important to note that the Arab Boycott was particularly strong during this

period, and many western multinationals fearful of jeopardising their business interests in the Arab world consequently submitted to the demands of the boycott; for example, Pepsi and MacDonalD's. China and Israel had discussed potential economic relations from as early as the 1950s. However, Beijing's diplomatic "long freeze" (Guang 1999, p.8) towards Israel and its hostile anti-Zionist rhetoric throughout the late 1950-70s rendered any formal commercial or political relations obsolete at a time when China prioritised its alliance with its more favoured Arab States (Burton 2016a, p.96). Unlike states that China did not have formal diplomatic relations but still pursued economic exchange, it was 'forbidden' to have direct trade with Israel (Sufott 1997, p.viii). China was one of the 26 non-Arab League states that had by 1987 chosen to boycott Israel, in full or in part (Feiler 1998, p.40). But, contrary to China's formal position on trading with Israel, Chinese goods were found in the Palestinian and Israeli market place since at least the 1970s.

These imports cannot be verified by China-Israel trade figures as official statistics did not exist until 1992 following the establishment of diplomatic relations between both parties. How then can the arrival of these goods be explained at a time when China was not officially exporting to Israel? This was simply done by labelling them as goods from another country. This was both a financial and logistical risk as Israel was wary of formally allowing this trade, but accessing China's growing market of competitively priced products was attractive at a time when both Israel and especially Palestine were comparatively isolated and in need of economic development.

In addition to consumer products, Palestinian traders, often from Hebron, sourced Chinese raw materials –in particular for textile and shoe manufacturing- for factories operating in the West Bank and Gaza (Trader interview, Hebron, Oct. 2017). Many of these factories were Israeli owned or dedicated to sub-contracting for the Israeli market. Moreover, during this time many Chinese consumer goods were also brought into the oPt across the Allenby Bridge from Jordan. For many Palestinians, Jordan provided -and still to this day provides- a key conduit to the outside world so the Jordanian market place became a source of goods -including those from China- that were often simply carried in personal luggage into the oPt. Ahmad was one such Palestinian businessman who was able to import before

the onset of more liberalised trade regulations post-PER (Interview, Oct. 2017). Ahmad established a wholesale company for kitchen appliances in 1968 and was –initially through an Israeli partner- sourcing goods from Asia, including China from the 1970s before he started importing more directly following his first visit to China in 1986 to attend the Canton Fair in Guangzhou. Officially, he only started to import directly from China in the 1990s. Until then importers like him would have to change the “certificate of origin” of their imports to represent countries that Israel was willing or able to do business with.¹⁸ As major manufacturing entrepôts of the region, many goods were labelled as “Made in Hong Kong” or “Singapore”, yet the former were generally goods from China and Taiwan and the latter from Malaysia (Ibid.). The goods would be shipped to these countries from China and then onwards to Israel and then Palestine. Hong Kong was particularly preferable because of both its geographic proximity to China’s principal manufacturing bases across the border in Guangdong Province but also because Hong Kong, under British sovereignty until 1997 had a more open policy towards Israel than Beijing. In 1985, an official Israeli diplomatic presence was established in Hong Kong, seven years before formal diplomatic relations were established with Beijing in 1992. Interestingly, until now, Israeli passports holders are entitled to a 90-day visa free period utilised by many transnational traders that travel to Hong Kong and then onwards to China. Palestinians, on the contrary, do not have this privilege and are advised to use their Jordanian passport, if they hold one.

The roots of Palestinian GFB had therefore already appeared in the decades preceding the PER. As presented in *Chapter Two*, the acts of ‘mislabelling’ and importing ‘indirectly’ are still prevalent today and continue to undermine our capacity to fully understand Palestinian international trade. It is these challenges that necessitate a study of China-Palestine trade from a ‘bottom’ up perspective. But for now, I will continue to use formal statistics as a guide to certain trends of globalised Palestinian trade in general and China-Palestine trade specifically, a phenomenon that truly took shape following the signing of the PER in 1994.

¹⁸ It is also important to note that many Israeli firms employed a range of tactics (including adjusting certificates of origin) to facilitate the export of Israeli goods. For more detail see Feiler 1998.

SECTION TWO: POST-OSLO ACCORDS

The Oslo Accords were to usher in a new era in Israel-Palestine relations, a 'peace process' that many hoped would finally bring tangible progress towards resolving decades of military occupation and often violent instability, but most importantly, a path towards eventual Palestinian self-determination. The negotiations encompassed immediate changes to the dynamics of Israel-Palestine relations while its 'interim' nature was to set the groundwork for longer-term solutions to some of the more critical issues.¹⁹ In regard to the trade sector –and specifically shaping the capacity for Palestinians to trade with China- the Protocol on Economic Relations (PER), signed in 1994 as part of the Oslo II negotiations, provided the framework for the internationalisation of the Palestinian economy.

The PER would define the economic relationship between Israel and Palestine. As with the Declaration of Principles (DOPs)²⁰ the PER was to exist for a five-year interim period following which the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) would gain greater autonomy in its economic affairs. The viability of a Palestinian state rested heavily -and continues to rest- on the capacity of the PA to dictate its economy, for example, autonomously managing its fiscal, monetary and trade policies. An independently directed trade strategy would also provide an integral mechanism to better manage its dependency on trade with Israel, while diversifying its trade relations with alternative partners.

However, the notion of using the OA and PER as an opportunity to completely de-link the two economies was not -at that time at least- fully appealing to either side (Arnon and Weinblatt 2001, p.293). For the Palestinians, its economy had become so heavily dependent on trade with Israel and could not risk interference with labour movements into the Israeli market. Furthermore, without established economic institutions it was deemed that the Palestinian economy would have struggled with the need for extensive and immediate structural adjustments and

¹⁹ The status of refugees, settlements, Jerusalem, security and borders were left for 'final status negotiations'.

²⁰A framework of confidence building measures to support final status negotiations on a resolution of the conflict.

competition from neighbouring markets such as Egypt and Jordan (Usher 1997, p.39). As such, in the early phases of negotiation the Palestinians called for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), an initiative that would have allowed it to set its own trade policies with non-members (i.e. every state but Israel) but maintain healthy bilateral relations with the Israeli economy (Ahmad 2014). But, such a policy would have necessitated the demarcation of independent external borders, supporting future Palestinian claims for overall sovereignty (Gross 1999, p.1599). This was undesirable to Israel, who instead sought to formalise many components of the 'customs union' that had been established in the pre-Oslo period, intrinsically tying the two economies together while also adding additional regulations that the Palestinians would need to abide by (Ibid.).

The economic case for the PER induced 'customs union' was that the 'free movement of labour and goods' would ensure ongoing employment opportunities in Israel and a market for Palestinian exports. This would, theoretically, lead to increased Palestinian revenues, investment, diversification and competitiveness in its industrial and manufacturing sector (Arnon and Weinblatt 2001, p.293). This was on the premise that labour and goods would trade freely with minimal interruption. Unfortunately, as Palestinians were already struggling with a drop in work opportunities in the Gulf following the drop in oil prices in the 1980s, as well as a fall in their real income earnings due to disturbances in the Israeli economy (Hever 2010 p.11),²¹ the period following the PER was defined by progressively more extensive Israeli imposed 'closure' that contributed to the further deterioration of the Palestinian economy. The benefits of economic integration were overridden by a new economic regime of 'imposed economic separation' (Arnon 2007, p.585).

In the three years following Oslo approximately a third of each year was under full 'closure' with more limited closure during the rest (Roy 2004, p.368).²² With approximately a third of Palestinians dependent on employment in Israel on the

²¹ This included high inflation and a stock market crash.

²² Roy (2004) highlighted four forms of closure that commenced during this period and are still ongoing today, ranging from partial to full: closure between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza (WB/G), closure between the West Bank and Gaza, closure between the West Bank and Jordan and Gaza and Egypt, and internal closure inside WB/G.

eve of the PER, the importance of ongoing free movement was of significant importance to the Palestinians (Elmusa and Al-Jaafari 1995, p.28). The PER did not make any assertions of the number of Palestinians that would work in Israel, but it was expected that the number would grow to around 70,000-100,000 over the coming years (Arnon and Weinblatt 2001, p.297). Instead, this unilaterally imposed separation resulted in a dramatic drop in Palestinian labour in Israel as work permits were revoked; for example, West Bank labour in Israel fell from 30% to 18% and 40% to 6% in Gaza in 1995-6 (Arnon 2007, p.587).

As 25% of Palestinian GNP was reliant on income generated from employment in Israel at the time of the PER signing (Usher 1997, p.36), such drastic declines in employment opportunities was devastating, with remittances falling as a percentage of GDP from 30% to 20% in the West Bank and 50% to 10% in Gaza in 1995-6 (Arnon 2007, p.587). This contributed to a 1995-6 rise in unemployment to approximately 20% in the West Bank and 30% in Gaza (Ibid.); the de-developed Palestinian economic sector (both private and public sector) was incapable of filling this gap. By 1998 15.4% of the West Bank and 46% of the Gaza Strip were defined as living in a state of 'poverty' (Farsakh 2008, p.10).²³ Naturally, the Palestinian consumer base was dramatically eroded in the process, this included a real GDP per capita drop by 18% between 1994-6 (Ibid).

Moreover, the capacity of Palestinian industry to absorb the growing number of unemployed was already limited following decades of Israeli policy that stumped the development of local industry (Elmusa and Al-Jaafari 1995, p.19). This was exacerbated by the 'closure' induced decline in Israeli imports of goods (e.g. raw materials) that were required for local industrial production and the diminished export outlet for Palestinian manufacturers, both to Israel and international markets (Arnon and Weinblatt 2001, p.300; Roy 2001, p.11). The de jure policy of 'free movement of labour and goods' enshrined in the PER was, therefore, not realised but unilaterally imposed by one party to the detriment of the other. And so, an agreement that should have provided benefits to each economy within the customs 'envelope' resulted in the oPt increasingly becoming a captive market in what Grinberg termed a 'strangling envelope' (2015, p.155).

²³ Earning less than \$2 per day.

Simultaneously, stipulations within the Paris Protocol continued to link the Palestinian economy to the conditions in Israel. Notably, pricing in the oPt was heavily tied to that in the Israeli state; this included, for example, Article III (7) that required VAT to be fixed at 15-16% and Article III (12b) that restricted the consumer price of gasoline to within 15% of the price in Israel. While the cost and complexities of importing petroleum products from neighbouring Egypt and Jordan has meant that Palestine has imported all such products only from Israel since 1994 (MAS 2012, p.3). Furthermore, with international imports controlled by Israeli ports and customs authorities, and regularly facing a range of formal and informal restrictions that added further costs to the import process compared to products going straight to Israel, the final consumer price of imported goods was often higher in the oPt than the same product in Israel.

If Palestinians were to seek cost-savings suitable for their market conditions the most viable option was regularly to seek Israeli goods (Taghsisi-Rad 2014, p.21-22). The combination of these issues meant the Palestinian consumer was in a weak position, as highlighted by a 2000 World Bank Group report that stated that though Palestinian GNP per capita (US Dollars) was higher than the regional average, when measured in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) it was only ahead of Yemen. This is particularly important when considering the disparity between Israeli and Palestinian incomes. In 1999, per capita income in the oPt was approximately \$2000 but around \$16,000 in Israel (Aljuni 2003, p.66). Looking at current day figures, this trend is still evident where average Palestinian salaries are approximately a tenth of the level in Israel, yet the price of many basic commodities are similarly priced:²⁴

We have the life costs of Paris and the salary of Somalia. (Trader, Ramallah, Sept. 2017).

²⁴ In a 2001 talk by former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Israel, Mr. Zvi Eckstein, stated that the average annual salary in Israel was approximately \$30,000 compared to \$2,000 in the West Bank. In December 2017 the average salary in Israel was 10,374 NIS (ICBS) while in Palestine 38.8% of the private sector do not even earn the Palestinian minimum wage of 1450 NIS (PCBS).

2.1. PALESTINIAN TRADERS GO GLOBAL

The desire of the Palestinian population to detach itself from such economic dependency on an occupying force, the cost of Israeli products, and the low Palestinian incomes and high unemployment rates meant seeking an alternative was widely welcome; Palestinian consumers were, therefore, positioned to benefit from cheap Chinese imports. Indeed, just as the stipulations in the PER have persisted to this day, so has the perspective that Chinese goods have continued to ease the pressure on Palestinian consumers (Field notes, Aug. 2017).

However, this process was only possible with the introduction of PER policies that enabled the PLO to develop its own international trade relations. By the late 1990s the PLO had signed trade agreements with seven different partners, from individual states such as Jordan and Egypt, to regional organisations such as the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) - the PLO has signed a further four since then. But, more importantly, was the establishment of Palestinian governmental institutions that could finally offer import licences directly to Palestinian traders (PER Article III, 9), as well as the provision of Palestinian Authority passports that allowed merchants to more easily travel abroad. Indeed, with the fall in labour opportunities in Israel and the steady deterioration of the Palestinian agricultural and manufacturing sectors the Palestinian trade sector grew with over 42,000 wholesalers and retailers by 2000 (PCBS).²⁵ The limited formal procedures to become an 'importer' rendered it a sector that could not only be entered by established business people, but increasingly, also by small scale and often speculative traders that were able to import simply by using their personal ID number (Ramallah Chamber of Commerce 2004):

Importing is the easiest job you can do in Palestine... if you have \$10k you should go to China and buy a container. (Interview with Jawad Sayyed, Former Chairman of the Hebron Chamber of Commerce, Hebron, Oct. 2017).

²⁵ 42,498.

The opportunity to engage in international trade presented a potentially lucrative economic pursuit when the Palestinian market was ripe for the import of non-Israeli goods and when global trade, more broadly, was entering one of its most rapid stages of acceleration with landmark economic liberalisation policies across the developing world. Palestinians, keen to engage in their new-found access to the fruits of 'globalisation' rushed to China to import all manner of goods. By 1999 Chinese imports to Palestine had reached \$98 million, from just \$10 million in 1996 when the first formal trade statistics with Palestine were recorded.

It is important not to note that this phenomenon was also largely influenced by conditions in Israel as well as the ongoing influence of PER stipulations that, for example, meant that the majority Palestinian imports were subject to the same regulations as imports into Israel. This was particularly relevant in the wake of Israel's heightened adoption of neoliberal informed governance in 1985 and its progressive acceptance into the international community due to its participation in the Oslo Accords -and with that also the steady easing of the Arab Boycott- in the early 1990s that saw Israel seeking to become a more active player in the global economy, including eventual accession to the WTO.

Following decades of a protectionist economic policy Israel pursued heightened economic liberalisation (Shalev 2000, p.138), notably a steady reduction in import tariffs in line with neoliberal principles of 'free trade' promulgated by international financial institutions (IFIs). Many of the products that Israel lowered its tariffs on were goods that it had previously manufactured in the West Bank and Gaza but now purchased from China, which contributed towards the progressive demise of these industries (Bouillon 2004, p.96).²⁶ As the lower tariffs were simultaneously applied to Palestine it facilitated the increase in Palestinian imports from China. Therefore, since its inception the PER has defined China-Palestine trade as a by-product of Israel's own economic policy. This is particularly relevant when considering that in 2012 95% of Israeli import tariffs were between 0-20% which is not conducive to the necessary protection that might be required by a small and developing economy such as Palestine (Misyef 2017, p.20).

²⁶ In 1992 China-Israel trade stood at a mere \$50 million, in 2001 Israel imported approximately \$833 million in Chinese goods, by 2015, the figure was a staggering \$8.6 billion (UN Comtrade figures).

To support Palestinians who wished to pursue opportunities to do business with China, organisations such as the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry ran trade delegations to China from 1997 until 2002 (Interview with Mr. Salah Hussein, General Manager of the Ramallah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Oct. 2017). The Chamber would take about 60-80 delegates each time to the spring and autumn installment of the famous Canton Fair in Guangzhou, the largest trade fair in the world. It is unsurprising that shortly following the first of these delegations Chinese imports to Palestine experienced their first significant spike, rising by nearly 300% between 1998-9. At the time of the delegations in the 1990s, the Chinese 'Embassy' was still based in Gaza, so to facilitate the provision of visas the Chinese ambassador was regularly invited to the Chambers office in Ramallah to stamp the passports of the delegates.

Nowadays, 'The Office of The Peoples Republic of China to the State of Palestine' in Ramallah is responsible for the provision of Chinese visas. Furthermore, organisations such as the Ramallah based and Palestinian run, Palestine-China Friendship Association provide a visa processing service to facilitate the application process. Unfortunately, neither the Chinese embassy nor the Friendship Association could provide the official number of Palestinians who have travelled to China since the 1990s. Though in recent years the Association says it helps to process up to 300 visas a month (Interview with Mr. Yahya Saleh, Deputy Director, Oct. 2017). During a 2017 Palestinian state delegation to Beijing both sides discussed the provision of multi entry visas for Palestinian businessmen (MEMO 2017). Therefore, at a time when citizens of many Middle Eastern states are finding it increasingly difficult to visit China, in particular those from more unstable countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen, it appears that the flow of Palestinian traders to China will, by comparison, continue unabated (Field notes, June 2017).

Palestinian business people continue to -on occasion- participate in governmental delegations such as those run by the Ministry of National Economy, or partake in predominantly Chinese funded sector specific delegations that include training programmes and site visits. But most traders now visit China independently, whether by themselves or in small groups that they have organised. Often traders will still plan their trips around the Canton Fair, but will

supplement this with company and factory visits relying on existing networks they have established, or often with the support of Arab agents based in China. As the General Manager of the Ramallah Chamber of Commerce and Industry -an early organiser of these delegations- stated:

By around 2002 everyone knew the way. Everyone knew about the China market and they didn't need our help. Maybe they help us now. (Mr. Salah Hussein, Oct.2017).

The majority of the 'early pioneers' in China-Palestine trade were from the group of what Nakhleh terms 'indigenous capitalists' (2012). That is, members of the economic community that were already engaged in some form of commercial venture pre-PER, and importantly, had the financial capital and business acumen to explore globalised trade. Many were already wholesalers with extensive experience of working with Israeli intermediaries or were manufacturers that had become enriched from subcontracting agreements with the Israeli private sector (Field notes, June 2018). In the latter case, they often resorted to becoming importers in response to the demise of subcontracting opportunities and the growing competition from foreign imports -particularly from China (Ibid.). As many of these 'early pioneers' were from the West Bank's principal commercial hub Hebron, I will explore their backgrounds and experiences in far greater detail in *Chapter Six*.

And so, following the rise of formal China-Palestine trade in the mid-late 1990s, primarily in response to the PER, the 2000s became the next crucial stage in the phenomenon of China-Palestine commerce. This was influenced by external factors, such as China's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 and following the expiration of the WTO's Multi Fibre Agreement in 2005, after which Palestinian imports of Chinese textiles and garments expanded rapidly: by 2011 38% of Palestinian textile imports were from China (Paltrade 2014a). But, as with the immediate post-PER period, it was local instability, ongoing Israeli formal and informal de-development policy, and new PA governing policies that dictated many of the domestic conditions that would define Palestinian globalised trade in general and China-Palestine trade in particular.

This included the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, and as of 2007, the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip (though it is beyond the remit of this thesis to focus on the situation in Gaza). While the PA's implementation of more concerted neoliberal policies since 2008 notably shaped the economic trajectory of Palestine, and with that the consumption habits of Palestinians. This period was also exemplified by the rise of new traders -predominantly retailers- that steadily contested the market share of the 'early pioneers'. Importantly, the emergence of such economic actors as part of a broader expansion of the Palestinian trade sector was -and continues to be- indicative of the progressive absence of viable alternative opportunities in the oPt due to ongoing de-development policies. As such, the GFB economy steadily became the go to sector and Safe Zone for both economic prosperity and in many cases survival.

SECTION THREE: EXPANSION OF THE 'SAFE ZONE' ECONOMY

The early 2000s saw an immediate expansion of Chinese exports globally, including to the Middle East. This was, however, not the experience in Palestine due to the unique conditions on the ground, for example, the outbreak of the Second Intifada in late 2000 and the subsequent Israeli policies. The high levels of violence and instability crippled the oPt socially, politically and economically. From a purely economic regard, the greater enactment of 'closure' policies, clampdowns on the PA, rapidly falling socio-economic conditions of Palestinians are but some of the issues that diminished the potential for Palestine to effectively import from overseas during this time. Palestine per capita incomes dropped by 40% during the first two years of the Second Intifada while GDP per capita fell by 38% over a similar period (World Bank 2004, p.9).

Under such conditions unemployment spiked to 31.2% in 2002 (PCBS);²⁷ likely contributing towards the demand for more affordable Chinese products as Palestinian consumers were forced to contract their overall consumption and savings rates (World Bank 2004, p.24). But rather, Palestinians with increasingly less disposable income were regularly under curfew while trading goods between Israel and Palestine, or within Palestine itself, was extremely difficult, let alone

²⁷ Combined West Bank and Gaza Strip figures.

importing internationally: Israel-Palestine trade declined by 36% between 2000 and 2002 (PCBS).²⁸ In the case of China-Palestine trade there was an immediate decline from the then highest rate recorded in 1999. The drop from 1999 to 2000 was marginal, indicative of the onset of the Second Intifada later in the year. But, in the following year a rapid drop occurred, a one-year decrease of approximately 49% between 2000 and 2001 (Ibid.),²⁹ followed by a further drop to 55% of 1999 levels by 2002 (Ibid.); trade with China only started to rebound in 2003. It is here worth signposting to the case study of Barta'a in *Chapter Seven* as an example of how the detrimental impacts of the Second Intifada were not homogenously experienced by all Palestinian traders.

The Second Intifada also had a key influence in further guiding Palestinians to pursue economic opportunities in the trade sector and away from more productive industries such as industry and agriculture, contributing to the progressive reconfiguration of the Palestinian economy. This period exemplified the risks of pursuing economic opportunities that could so quickly be negatively impacted by often unforeseeable instability and Israeli policy. As such, investment in more productive sectors and long-term economic ventures were less appealing. This is evident with a 62,000 rise in retail sector employees in 2001, and a further 70,000 in 2002 - in many cases these Palestinians had formerly worked in Israel (Morrar and Gallouj 2016, p.183). More broadly, over the 2003-5 period the oPt experienced a 46% rise in registered wholesale and retail establishments -with a corresponding 41% increase in workers in these sectors- that sought to explore economic endeavours in domestic and international trade as it was a comparatively easy sector to enter, in general required less financial investment, had to date shown a decent degree of profitability, and importantly, represented less risk (Field notes, June 2018).³⁰ And so, GFB activity steadily became the Safe Zone of Palestinian economic development and gave the opportunity for many traders "to breathe".

This trend has remained until today as Palestine's productive sectors continue to

²⁸ 42% in the case of trade with the West bank and 20% with the Gaza Strip. Calculated using PCBS figures.

²⁹ \$89,305,000 to \$45,987,000.

³⁰ A rise from 39,188 to 57,052 retail and wholesale establishments, and 77,476 to 10,9456 related employees.

underperform while consumption remains a principle driver of the economy (World Bank 2018; UNCTAD 2017; 2019). The industrial sector contributed 20.5% towards Palestinian GDP in 1995, but by 2017 represented a mere 13% - it is worth noting that in neighbouring Jordan it is at 25% (Misyef 2017, p.31). While the Palestinian agriculture sector's impact on GDP has fallen from 11.8% to just 2.9%, again from 1995-2017 (PMA Data). It is estimated that the Palestinian economy is operating at only 40% of its productive capacity (Misyef 2017, p.17). Unsurprisingly, the contribution of the trade sector towards GDP has steadily risen to 19.1% in 2017 (PMA 2018, p.10), but as with the other sectors where growth has been experienced, in particular construction and services, it offers little in terms of long term economic development that traditionally depends upon an active industrial and agricultural sector and the affiliated export opportunities (UNCTAD 2017, p.4).

If you decide to produce this pen you will lose your mind before you do it ... but if you import it ... don't talk to anybody, no one will interfere. No need any signature from anybody. Just take it from China. (Interview with Mr. Tareq Abu Felat, Former Palestinian Federation of Leather Industries, Hebron, June 2018).

In addition to the perennial challenges that Israeli occupation imposes over the Palestinian economy, for example, the mitigated control over oPt borders, heavily regulated import procedures that regularly deprive the oPt of necessary raw materials to manufacture effectively, and stringent export protocols that challenge Palestinian producers from selling into the global market (World Bank 2017, p.12). The movement away from productive economic sectors is also tied extensively to the limitation in access to Palestinian natural resources and land that could be used for both agriculture or industrial activity.

This most notably refers to 61% of the West Bank that following the signing of the OA was designated as Area C: under full Israeli security and administrative control. Area C, for example, includes illegal Israeli settlements and the surrounding land that support their existence, but it also includes swathes of land in areas such as the Jordan Valley where a notable amount of fertile Palestinian land is located, or the Dead Sea that could provide a significant source of

Palestinian natural resource and tourism revenue (Nicolette and Hearn 2012; Melon 2018). Currently, only 1% of Area C is available for Palestinian use while 68% is allocated to Israeli settlements and 21% is closed military zones (Niksic et al. 2014, p.13). It is estimated that if the PA had full access to Area C it could result in 33% additional cumulative GDP growth in the West Bank economy by 2025 (World Bank 2017, p.6). In the absence of PA control over this area it mitigates the capacity for Palestinian investment beyond Area A and B. Indeed any proposed construction in Area C requires Israeli approval: between 2009-12 only 2.3% of Palestinian building applications were approved (Kadman 2013, p.19). As a result most proceed without permits resulting in endless campaigns of Israeli demolitions of 'illegal' Palestinian constructions; often homes, schools or even foreign donor aid funded projects (UN OCHA 2019a).

Unsurprisingly, this contributes towards the progressive isolation of investment in Areas A -indicative of, for example, rapidly rising land prices (Clarno 2017, p.118)- in the trade and services sector as the already saturated land use offers limited opportunity for industrial sector development, while economic actors are either unwilling or incapable of investing in Area B and especially C due to the limited capacity to guarantee and secure these investments (Burton 2016c, p.56). This falls in line with a longstanding Israeli de-development strategy of 'expropriation', whereby Palestinians have been dispossessed of key resources required for the growth of their productive sectors (Roy 1999, p.65). While simultaneously allowing Israel to maintain control over land that is designated for a future Palestinian state, but has rather increasingly been de-facto annexed as part of expansionist Israeli settler colonial policy (Lieber 2016).

3.1. A NEOLIBERAL INSPIRED CONSUMER ECONOMY - THE MID-LATE 2000s ONWARDS

By 2004 Chinese imports had almost returned to 2000 figures, and thereafter, Chinese imports to Palestine -collectively- have grown at a rapid rate. According to UN Comtrade figures, by 2007 Chinese imports were to the value of \$143.8 million. Since then, imports have dropped only once before reaching a 2016 level

of \$382.7 million.³¹ Therefore, between 2004-2007 imports grew by approximately 67% and by a notable 147% between 2007 and 2016 (PCBS). Such growth saw China become Palestine's second largest source of imports since 2007, overtaking both of Palestine's traditional partners Egypt and Jordan (Israel consistently first). It held this position until 2010 when Turkey became second. Since then, Turkey and China have fluctuated between 2nd and 3rd largest market share at around 3-5% each (Ibid.).

3.2. THE RISE OF THE RETAILER

This period saw the continuous transition towards a trade sector driven economy, though increasingly lead by retailers. This was partly guided by a broad consensus that at best you might make 50% profit on goods purchased from a wholesaler but at least 100% if you source it directly; product dependent (Field notes, 2017). Consequently, "the people opened their eyes and everyone wanted to go to China" (Interview with Mr. Salah Hussein, Oct. 2017), as the comparative monopoly of wholesalers became increasingly challenged:

The wholesalers started to get greedy. They came to me complaining that we should do more to help them. But I told them that the market did not shrink but the share had started to spread across many smaller players as well. (Interview with Mr. Jawad Sayyed, Former CEO of the Hebron Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hebron, Sept. 2017).

This correlates to PCBS data where by 2009 retail trade constituted 44% of employees and 59.9% of firms in the expanding Palestinian service sector (Morrar and Gallouj 2016, p.187). More broadly, there was a 105% increase from 1999 to 2016 in the number of domestic wholesale and retail enterprises with a 125% rise in the number of employees. In 2017, retailers represented approximately 82% of internal trade establishments and employed around 74% of those engaged in this sector (PCBS).³² Though it is likely that this sector is far

³¹ They dropped in 2008 as Chinese imports to Gaza stopped being officially reported by the PCBS.

³² Note that for retailers this does not include those trading in motorcycles or motor vehicles and for wholesalers it includes both those trading and not trading in motor vehicles and motorcycles.

more active than the statistics show because many shops are operated on a comparatively informal basis, inconsistent in their formal registration and accounting. An afternoon spent in a standard Palestinian shop will reveal the numerous family members or students that are hired unofficially and paid cash in hand (Field notes, 2018). There is limited comprehensive or contemporary data on the Palestinian informal economy, but it was estimated in 2008 that over 45% of firms in the West Bank were informal (Al-Falah 2014).

In the absence of the levels of financial capital equivalent to the 'early pioneers' these new transnational traders often travelled to China with a one-off sum that they had saved or compiled with the support of family and friends. In many cases a group of prospective importers would combine finances to source one container from market cities such as Yiwu. If importing from China did not work that time they may not be able to try again anytime soon. This period became indicative of a statement that I heard consistently throughout my trips to the West Bank:

If you have \$10k you should go to China and buy a container. (Field notes, 2016-2019).³³

As these traders were generally limited to pursuing comparatively small-scale and often speculative business ventures -to begin with at least- they were often drawn to the importation of cheap and counterfeit goods so as to maximise profits from globalised trade. Many of these traders are actors in networks of what Natsheh and Pairzot (2015) term 'informal entrepreneurship' that seek commercial gains in the shadows and cracks of Israel's domination over Palestinian economic sovereignty.

Hassan is a perfect introduction to this new group of retail traders. In 1996, only two years after graduating from University he opened a shop selling car accessories in Ramallah. Hassan relied exclusively on a Palestinian wholesaler who himself was importing through an Israeli wholesaler: "I was importing third hand, it made no sense" (Oct. 2017). Though his business was stable he knew

³³ I have heard this expression (in varying forms) during all my field trips to the West Bank; this includes during interviews with traders, consumers and government officials.

that there was opportunity for greater profit. It was, however, not until 2007 that he decided to act, and of all the products that motivated Shadi to import directly from China it was to source boxes to hold tissues!

By importing through a wholesaler his profit margin was only a couple of Shekels based on an import price of NIS 22. By chance, Shadi went online to see whether he could find a cheaper option. A retailer in China sold it for NIS 5. Convinced that the most viable way for him to grow his business was by going to China himself Hassan gathered \$22,000 and travelled to Guangzhou in 2007. “That was a lot of money for me then! It was a big risk” (Ibid.). Hassan bought back one container and after about a year he had made three times his investment in profit; since then he has gone back each year (often on multiple occasions), steadily increasing the range of goods that he sourced, continuously building a network of suppliers across the country, and perennially making solid profit margins. Hassan showed me his membership card to the China-Palestine Friendship Association, as he so frequently visits China he uses their service to get his visas. In turn, they regularly invite him on Chinese funded delegations. Shadi has, therefore, become a preeminent example of a Palestinian trader who has relied on China for his livelihood: “everything in my shop is from China, everything!”

And the box to store tissues, when he went to China Hassan got it for NIS 4.

While Hassan’s story is one of success there are negatives in this new type of trade. By taking advantage of what had until then been a period when Chinese goods were deemed as affordable, comparatively good quality and welcome in the Palestinian market, importing from China progressively appealed to ever more inexperienced and short-term speculative traders that sought upward mobility under occupation. As a result, not only was the Palestinian market place increasingly inundated with Chinese imports, but the quality of goods steadily deteriorated since the 2000s. A notion supported by the words of a prominent Palestinian broker:

Bad quality can often make better profit than good quality. (Ramallah, Oct. 2017).

For example, traders who had never been to China were astounded by how they could source seemingly the same product for a fraction of the price. The cheaper the price each Chinese vendor offered the more inclined many Palestinian traders looking to make a quick return on investment were willing to let quality standards drop. Agents in China stated that the first wave of traders in the early 1990s were comparatively conscious of quality, but this soon changed:

In China you can buy what looks like the same pair of jeans for \$1, \$10, \$100 or \$1000. (Yiwu, June 2017).

Indeed, Palestinian agents in China commented that some of these small-scale traders were only selling Chinese goods part time. Often, they bought a few cartons of cheap Chinese products and shared a container with like-minded traders who were also willing to accept small profit margins due to the low level of investment (Field notes, Yiwu, June 2017). These traders might just sell these goods on the street on the weekend to supplement their regular job, in some cases hiring other people such as their younger siblings to sell on their behalf (Ibid.).

The traders, also less risk adverse and seeking short-term profit were more willing to import counterfeit goods, such as branded shoes and clothing. To bypass comparatively stringent Israeli customs traders they adopted a range of techniques to introduce such goods into the Palestinian market. This included quite common strategies such as filling the majority of a container with an approved item while hiding a selection of counterfeit goods in boxes at the back. Or similarly, filling the bottom of a selection of boxes in a container with unapproved goods with legitimate products layered on. More recently, techniques included importing goods without the branding and then importing the logos in small packages that can easily be hidden in a container or simply carried back in the luggage of a trader. If possible, the logos can just be stuck on, such as the example below. Or stitched on in workshops in the West Bank, many of which are based in and around Hebron. This practice has been utilised by Israeli traders seeking to import counterfeit goods who use the West Bank as a transit zone for the importation and then 'labelling' of such products before smuggling them back into the Israeli market (Natsheh and Pairzot 2015).



Figure 2 Volkswagen and Mercedes logos to be stuck onto an unbranded car key



Figure 3 Shoes in Yiwu without a logo that can be stitched on later (left), or with false labels already attached (middle and right)

In an interview with a retailer that sells counterfeit Nike trainers I was educated on the process. The trader imports the product for approximately 30-50 Shekels without the logo, the logo is then added at a workshop in Hebron for 5 Shekels, the shoe is then sold for 220 Shekels. Notwithstanding the natural mark up in a shop, by utilising a small amount of Palestinian input the cheap Chinese good has notably increased in value to the benefit of the trader as selling it without the logo would cost just 100 Shekels (Field notes, Oct. 2017). A successful retailer can therefore make sizeable profit on counterfeit goods. This model has changed in recent years as certain Palestinian factories -those I identified during my field work were in the Hebron area- are manufacturing the entire shoe with the false logo all in the West Bank (Field notes, July 2018). The rise of retail trade just discussed and its tendency towards counterfeit or poor quality goods was, however, only indicative of the supply side of Palestinian GFB. Of equal importance was the changing dynamics in local demand, specifically how such consumption was financed.

3.3. THE DEBT CONSUMER

The accelerated growth in China-Palestine trade since 2008 is notably connected to the rise in Palestinian GDP that also commenced at this time: from \$4.8 billion in 2008 to \$8 billion in 2016 (PCBS).³⁴ A period exemplified by the more concerted pursuit of neoliberal policy under former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad: an agenda commonly termed 'Fayyadism'. The associated reforms had a clear impact on Palestinian consumption. For example, the expansion of the financial sector and specifically the availability of credit facilitated the consumer spending of Palestinians while pushing a growing number into debt (Abunimah 2012; Hanieh 2016). Notably, between 2009 and 2013 individual loans rocketed from \$494 million to one billion with three quarters of the public sector in debt in 2014 (Dana 2014a). By 2017, borrowing by PA employees reached \$1.6 billion, for the first time surpassing direct PA loans (\$1.4 billion) - both combined constituted 35% of total credit in the oPt (World Bank 2018, p.41). Though a large degree of this debt financed spending went towards higher value consumption including cars or mortgages, invariably it also facilitated the purchase of imported goods, including Chinese products (Field notes, 2018).

Importantly, a significant amount of credit support has been funnelled into the trade sector; notably, in contrast to finance towards more productive areas like industry. This trend, in fact, started before 'Fayyadism' with a 820% increase in credit financing provided to those engaged in importing in 2007 compared to 1996 (80% increase in aid of the Palestinian export sector over the same period), while the industrial sector experienced just a 33% rise (PMA Data). Thereafter, from 2008-16 credit towards local and foreign trade rose by 335%, and just 98% in the manufacturing sector (Ibid.). This was, in part, a reflection of the diminished demand of Palestinians to engage and invest in productive sectors but also the comparative difficulty to access credit as banks sought to avoid the risk involved in facilitating such activities (Misyef 2017, p.32). In 2016, 26% of bank credit to

³⁴ It is important to note the variations between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For example, GDP growth in Gaza has a notable effect on overall GDP, yet a significant part of this is associated to (re) construction in response to the various Israeli military campaigns, most recently in 2014.

the private sector went towards consumption while only 2% to agriculture and 6% to mining and manufacturing – 20% to the trade sector (UNCTAD 2017, p.4). This means investment has steadily gone towards service oriented micro and small firms that do not employ more than four employees, yet constitute around 90% of the oPt economy (UNCTAD 2018, p.2). And so, again, it would appear more appealing and accessible to explore opportunities in the Safe Zone economy.

One particular financial tool that noticeably contributed towards expanded domestic consumption was the availability of payment in ‘cheques’ (Jameel 2018).³⁵ The ability to pay in cheques increased the direct purchasing by consumers, but it also facilitated the heightened importation of goods from China. This included the increase in sourcing of Chinese products by Palestinian retailers from domestic wholesalers that in turn lead to the wholesaler importing more, but also wholesalers offering their Palestinian agents in China cheques as guarantees to enable them to import at higher levels (Field notes, June 2018). This was aided by the prolific use of post-dated cheques that enabled individuals without the necessary finances to speculate on their future ability to fulfil payment obligations – thus enticing further consumption (Jameel 2018, p.6).

But with the perennial socio-economic challenges in the oPt and the weakened purchasing power of many Palestinians it has increasingly resulted in the phenomenon of bounced cheques that has in recent years gained notable attention. From 2007-2017, the annual growth rate of bounced cheques was 6.9%, and was particularly high in 2015-17 at a rate of 16.7% (Khalil n.d., p.3). In 2017, 7.7% (735,000) of cheques presented for clearance were rejected to a value of \$1154 million – a notably high rate in comparison to regional averages (Jameel 2018, p.1).³⁶ As a result, wholesalers and Palestinian agents in China have increasingly limited their willingness to accept payment in cheques in recent years (Field notes, 2018). Particularly as they often feel that there is limited recourse to hold to account those that miss payment (Ibid.).

³⁵ Between 2012 and 2017, the volume of cheques presented for clearance increased from 4,400.00 to 6,375.86 with an associated value increase of 9,600.00 (US\$ million) to 15,072.77.

³⁶ Jameel (2018) sites the case of Jordan over the last five years where the rate is 3.5%, and below 1% in Abu Dhabi.

The post-2008 period of expanded Palestinian GDP is therefore misleading as it constitutes a high amount of debt financed growth, but furthermore, if additional economic indicators are considered the situation on the ground is also much more dire. This includes conditions that reinforce an ongoing demand for affordable Chinese goods, for example, an unwaveringly high unemployment rate that has not dropped below 20% since 2001 (having risen from 14.3% in 2000 to 25.9% in 2015), and persistent levels of poverty between 20-25% (PCBS). Palestinian purchasing power has also continued to be undermined by inadequate wage increases. For example, the introduction of a minimum wage (1,450 NIS) in 2013 has largely been ineffective as not only is it insufficient to meet the basic needs of many Palestinian families, but the PCBS estimated that in 2017 38.8% of Palestinian workers in the private sector earned less than it (PCBS Labour Force Survey 2017).³⁷ Of further concern was that in 2008 it was estimated that workers in the informal sector -that comprised almost half of Palestinian companies- earned 27% less than the formal sector (Al-Falah 2014). It is important to remember that these challenges exist in parallel to the persistence of PER stipulations that have since their inception pushed up prices of key commodities while keeping Palestine a captive market to Israeli exports.

SECTION FOUR: THE 'SAFE ZONE' CONSUMER BASE

The increased dependence on debt financed consumption in an environment of ongoing socio-economic instability provides an insight into the fragility of Palestinian GFB, and why many Palestinian traders believe that Israel, too, deems such commercial activity as the Safe Zone of Palestinian economic development. Not only as GFB seldom contributes towards the long-term productive capacity of the Palestinian economy, but because Israel always has the capacity to undermine the viability of the sector. This is particularly evident when further considering the principal consumers that underpin Palestinian GFB and the source of their finance. This includes the public sector that relies heavily on donor aid and clearance revenues to support the payment of salaries; employment and associated incomes of Palestinians that work in Israel or illegal

³⁷ According to the survey 40,200 workers (17.9%) earn less than the minimum wage in the West Bank (average salary is 1079 NIS) and 90,400 workers (80.6%) in the case of Gaza (731 NIS average).

settlements; Palestinian Citizens of Israel that visit the West bank. In each case scarcely representing domestically created finance, but also, a consumer base that Israel can -at any moment- both directly and indirectly cut off from the Palestinian market. Having earlier looked at the risk of debt financed consumption, I will now consider the other sources of consumption just listed, and their associated challenges.³⁸

4.1. PUBLIC SECTOR

The oversized, and largely considered inefficient and ineffective Palestinian public sector is, nevertheless, a key source of Palestinian consumption. This includes the PA itself, but also, its employees. Public sector workers, have consistently constituted approximately 22% of the work force between 2007-2015 (PCBS).³⁹ Yet, the financing of the PA has perennially been a source of contention and unsustainability, this includes a dependence, to a diminishing degree, on donor aid, and increasingly on clearance revenues.

In the first case, donor aid constituted around 50% of the PA's expenditures in 2008 and in the case of EU donor aid specifically, over the 2008-2012 period it contributed towards the payment of at least half of the 170,000 civil servants and pensioners in 2014 (Wildeman 2018, p.188). However, this dynamic has dramatically changed with the progressive decrease in donor aid in recent years: from 2014-16 it fell by 38% from \$1.23 billion to \$757 million (UNCTAD 2017, p.8). In 2017, donor aid allocated for PA expenditure financing was just 17% of PA expenditures, 28% of the public sector wage bill (PMA Data). Nevertheless, donor aid remains a relevant life line to support the functioning of the PA, and recently, to also help mitigate its burgeoning fiscal deficits.

³⁸ There are, of course, other sources of finance that could be studied. For example, the role of overseas remittances (not from work in Israel) that contribute up to 10% of Palestinian GDP (World Bank 2017, p.31). Such finance regularly supports the Palestinian economy in response to times of crisis which is why its value always increases after periods of heightened political instability: for example, military attacks on Gaza or following Israeli imposed tax withholdings that limit public sector salaries.

³⁹ The figures vary between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The former between 15-16% and the latter around 40% over the 2007-15 period (PCBS).

Scholars have also commented on how aid contributes to the sustaining of the occupation as its financing is invariably funnelled back into the Israeli public and private sector from whom the Palestinians are forced to source goods and services, with the international community footing the bill (Hever 2010, p.37). Simultaneously, the significance of clearance revenues as a contributor to the PA budget has risen sharply: in 2008 it represented 31% of PA revenues but by 2017 reached around 66% (Arafeh 2018, p.3), consistently sufficient to cover the approximately 50% of the PA budget spent on the public sector wage bill (PMA 2018, p.26), But this is a concerning structure for two reasons:

Firstly, it highlights an overreliance on imports into the oPt and the absence of a viable export sector, further rendering the oPt a primarily consumption based economy. The trade imbalance is evidenced by perennial trade deficits that reached 37.1% of GDP in 2017 to the value of \$5,374.2 million (Ibid., p.36) - the World Bank considers such a level to not only to be amongst the highest in the world but indicative of a status of “protracted violent conflict in failed state contexts” (2017, p.21). Secondly, Israel is responsible for the collection and transfer of the majority of these clearance revenues, and therefore has the power to withhold this source of PA finance – as it has done since 1997 for a cumulative total of approximately four years (Iqtait 2018). This means that public sector workers are regularly left in precarious financial conditions as they are often held captive to Israeli policies that jeopardize the availability of their salaries. For example, in 2015, Israel withheld over \$500 million for almost four months resulting in 18,000 public sector workers only receiving about 60% of their salary (Sawafta 2015).⁴⁰ Most recently, in 2019, public sector workers -at the time of writing- received 50% of the salaries in response to Israeli tax withholding (World Bank 2019a).⁴¹ Such disturbances to public sector salaries can, unsurprisingly, have a notable impact on the local trade economy. As one trader stated:

When the public sector don't get their salaries you will see all the traders with tears in their eyes. (Trader Interview, Hebron, May 2018).

⁴⁰ In response to the PA's application to join the International Criminal Court (ICC)

⁴¹ In this case, Israel sought to deduct the amount of money that the PA provides to the families of Palestinian 'prisoners' and 'martyrs'.

4.2. PALESTINIAN WORKERS IN ISRAEL AND ILLEGAL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

The purchasing power of Palestinians that derive their incomes from work inside Israel or illegal settlements is a substantial contributor to local purchasing capacity in the oPt. Since 2007 the number of Palestinians in this category has over doubled from approximately 62,000 to over 130,000 in 2017 (PMA Data), constituting around 20% of the West Bank workforce (UNCTAD 2018 p.7); a further 25,000-42,000 work in Israel illegally without a permit (ILO 2017, p.22). It is generally estimated that these employees can earn three times more than from employment in the oPt (UNCTAD 2017, p.19). In 2016, the income of these workers equated to approximately \$1 billion, or 25% of the West Bank's labour income (Ibid., p.22). As a result, the contribution of such incomes to Palestinian GDP is as high as 12% and is, therefore, affiliated to a notable amount of domestic consumption (World Bank 2017, p.11).

But as witnessed in the immediate years post-PER, and particularly during the Second Intifada, these employment opportunities can be withdrawn to the detriment of the local Palestinian economy – and of course, to Palestinian life in general. The most stark example is Gaza where by 2006 no Palestinians were able to work inside Israel and since this period unemployment has reached as high as 44% in 2017 (World Bank 2018, p.9). While the comparatively lower levels of unemployment in the West Bank (18%) is pre-eminently a result of the ongoing opportunities these Palestinians have to seek such forms of employment.

This relationship is a clear reflection of the ongoing de-development policy of 'integration and externalisation' whereby the Palestinian workforce -and the Palestinian economy more broadly- in the oPt continues to overly depend on Israel to sustain local economic growth. Moreover, such employment opportunities in Israel are primarily semi or unskilled which both mitigate the human capital development of the Palestinian workforce while continuing to channel workers away from domestic productive sectors that would otherwise contribute towards more sustainable economic development (Roy 1999, p.65).

4.3. PALESTINIAN CITIZENS OF ISRAEL

Many Palestinian Citizens of Israel go the oPt to due to a shared linguistic and cultural background, and often also out of a sentiment to support the economic development of their Palestinian counterparts rather than supporting the Israeli economy (Khalidi and Alsattari 2014, p.10). But fundamentally, many visit the oPt based on economic rationale often influenced by their predominantly lower economic status and weak purchasing power in Israel, routinely driven by their subjugation to a range of formal and informal discriminatory policies (Shehadeh and Khalidi 2014). In 2009, it was estimated that over half of Arab families in Israel were classified as poor compared to just over 20% for all families in Israel (Adalah 2011, p.19). The West Bank market place offers this community a comparative cost advantage to access more affordable products that would otherwise be difficult to source in Israel (Burton 2016c, p.55). It was estimated in 2013 that this consumer group contributed upwards of NIS 1.1 billion in West Bank purchases in what is largely 'unrecorded' trade that should officially be registered as Palestinian exports to Israel (Khalidi and Alsattari 2014, p.16)

The significance of this group is evident in major market towns such as Hebron, Nablus, Jenin and Ramallah during the weekend as Israeli licensed plated vehicles dominate the streets. In the case of the Northern West Bank city of Jenin, in 2017, 920,000 Israeli cars came to Jenin bringing an estimated 2.5 million visitors, mostly for shopping or to procure local services (Interview with Mr. Mohammad Kmail, General Director of Jenin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, June 2018). If based on \$100 spent per visitor that would equate to \$250 million (Ibid.). But again, this key source of consumption is dependent on the open access of Palestinian Citizens of Israel into the oPt and is, therefore, also detrimentally affected by any form of 'closure'. Notably, this does not only include times of political instability but also during, for example, Israeli holidays when many key checkpoints into the oPt are closed. *Chapter Seven* on Barta'a will show just how important are these consumers and the role of Israeli checkpoints, specifically the Separation Wall.

And so, a brief study of the principal consumers and sources of finance that underpin the Palestinian GFB economy highlight both their unsustainability, and

how they are invariably governed by the Israeli authorities. The former evident by the high dependency on either debt or externally generated finance, the latter seen by the impact of, for example, the withholding of Palestinian taxes or the enactment of closure policies. For Palestinian traders trying to survive in an environment of ongoing de-development this unfortunately means being dependent on a reliable consumer base even if the sources of consumption run counter to long-term Palestinian economic, and by virtue political, development. What the preceding analysis also showed is that the sustainability of trading opportunities by Palestinian merchants is heavily reliant on political stability and pacification in the West Bank as judged by Israel.

Such a contention provides important context when considering the priorities of those actively engaged in the GFB sector. For example, it is, arguably, often in the interest of traders to remain comparatively de-politicised -at least in action if not rhetorically- so that they can maintain their access to the opportunities provided by the GFB economy. Otherwise, Israel has the power to, for example, abruptly stifle the viability of their consumer base. It is such a dynamic that -to varying degrees- informs the motivations and practices of GFB actors in the empirical case studies of this thesis. While such preeminent capacity to dictate Palestinian GFB means that for Israel it too can deem GFB a Safe Zone activity as it offers an avenue for regulated Palestinian economic growth that is wholly tied to Israeli interests.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a contextual background to the rise of the Palestinian GFB economy, or what I have also termed the Safe Zone - with specific reference to Chinese imports to Palestine. I showed variations in the demand for, and supply of, Chinese goods that have paralleled the progressively globalised Palestinian economy. Importantly, the chapter showed that it is impossible to consider China-Palestine trade without a comprehension of Israel-Palestine relations, and specifically how both formal and informal Israeli de-development policies pre-eminently determined the social, political and economic conditions that have on occasion impeded but also heightened the importation of affordable Chinese products. This includes the time before Palestine could formally trade with China

but when Chinese goods were, nevertheless, found in the Palestinian market place, to specifically following the signing of the Protocol on Economic Relations (PER) in 1994 after which the rate of Chinese imports has grown comparatively unabated.

I explored the post-PER era in broadly two periods, the time directly after its signing and in the post-2000 era. For the former, I focused on the impact of Israeli 'closure' policy as a notable contributor to the demand for Chinese goods in the mid-late 1990s as it resulted in a rapid decline in Palestinian employment and purchasing power. At the time, the Palestinian consumer market was desperate for more affordable alternatives following decades of being captive to more costly Israeli products under an asymmetrically imposed quasi customs union. The 'early pioneers' of China-Palestine trade that were now able to import independently were quick to fill this demand.

The chapter then considered the impact of some of the more standout events in the 2000s that influenced China-Palestine commerce and the further expansion of GFB activity; namely, the Second Intifada and the promulgation of a more neoliberal development agenda since 2007. In addition to the ongoing socio-economic challenges faced by Palestinians -many in contrast to the seemingly positive macro indicators such as GDP growth- I highlighted how under ongoing policies of de-development this period saw the further reorientation of the Palestinian economy.

In particular, away from productive sectors that encourage more sustainable economic development, but towards the less productive but more viable and comparatively less risky opportunities found in the Safe Zone of economic development offered by the GFB economy. Concernedly, this progressively consumption driven economy has been dependent on either unsustainable or Israeli governed sources of consumption; including, for example, debt, donor aid, clearance revenues, employment in Israel, and Palestinian Citizens of Israel. This provided a further insight as to why Israel can too see Palestinian GFB as a Safe Zone, because it's control of the consumer base is intrinsically tied to political stability in Palestine. Therefore giving Palestinians an opportunity "to breathe" but with limited risk against Israeli domination.

Though I primarily drew upon formal statistics in this chapter to highlight the trends in China-Palestine trade, the experiences of traders pre-PER, the 'early pioneers' and latter small scale 'retailers', that I commented on showed the importance of a 'bottom up' approach. A perspective that undoubtedly challenges the official data and is integral to a GFB study. But these traders are just one facet of Palestinian GFB. They are an integral entry point to the broader actors and practices in this phenomenon, those active in Palestine but also Israel and China. Indeed, the varying geographies of Palestinian GFB highlight the lack of homogeneity in how Palestinian GFB exists, operates, survives and often thrives in different contexts.

It is at this point where the thesis will begin exploring the two empirical chapters of Palestinian GFB in the oPt. The overriding framework of each chapter is identifying the role of formal and informal Israeli policy on the deterritorialisation of these sites of Palestinian GFB, and specifically how this has shaped the socio-economic and political trajectories of those Palestinians engaged in GFB activity – with particular consideration of the impacts on Israel's settler colonial project. I begin with the case of the city of Hebron. It is a useful point of departure as one trader stated to me:

Everything in Hebron is from China...even the people are becoming Chinese. (Trader, Sept. 2017).

CHAPTER SIX: HEBRON - GFB INSIDE A DIVIDED CITY

As the 'service' (local minibus) draws closer to the main Hebron bus station it has navigated a seemingly endless array of shops that sprawl across all the major thoroughways into the city centre. The bus station itself is awash with small stores that merge into the bustling Adel Street. Along this main road where Palestinian shoppers from across the West Bank spill out upon arrival in Hebron they are confronted by a growing number of new built shopping malls, individual retail outlets, side alley vendors that simply hang their goods on the wall and street peddlers carting a trolley of cheap and low quality goods. A further assessment will show that not only are the different outlets invariably similar, if not identical, but the quality of goods and their source are generally the same – 'Made in China'. This phenomenon was aptly summarised by one notable Palestinian trader when he said to me: "everything in Hebron is from China...even the people are becoming Chinese." (Field notes, Sept. 2017).

INTRODUCTION

The city of Hebron, Palestine's historic commercial and industrial centre, has for many years played a preeminent role as the conduit for Palestinian trade with the rest of the world, especially in the post-PER era. In recent decades, Hebron's trade with one particular partner has contributed towards the city steadily becoming synonymous with one thing - goods that are 'Made in China'. This is because the Hebron Governate, led by its capital the City of Hebron, has been at the forefront of China-Palestine trade since the formal registration of this commerce in 1996. Until 2016 it had never represented less than about 31% of Chinese imports to Palestine - peaking at 41% to a value of approximately \$50 million in 2008 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics).⁴² As a result, the Hebron trader community has established a reputation as both the early pioneer and the preeminent current day intermediary of this commerce.

⁴² Note that besides 2008 to 2011, this includes figures for Chinese export to the Gaza Strip. Therefore, if one does not include the Gaza Strip, but focuses purely on Chinese exports to the West Bank, the percentage of goods going to Hebron would be even higher.

The story goes that once a Chinese representative office was opened in Ramallah in the late 1990s Chinese officials often travelled to the city of Hebron to grant visas to Hebronite businesses people as they regularly constituted the majority of delegates travelling to China on arranged business delegations - this service was provided to save them travelling to Ramallah.⁴³ A Palestinian sourcing agent in China jokingly told me that as Hebronites were such prominent traders in China many Chinese thought that Hebron was a country, they did not know about Palestine. Throughout my time in Hebron (but also other parts of the West Bank) this anecdote was well known -and repeatedly shared- by many Palestinians I met. Even today, Palestinian traders will often comment that on a flight from Amman to China at least half of the Palestinian passengers will be from Hebron. As such, Hebron can increasingly be considered as a key 'node' of GFB, drawing comparison to the role of other notable market places, and their affiliated trade communities, found across the world (e.g., Neuwirth 2011; Aguiara 2013; Belguidoum and Pliez 2015; Carrier 2016).

At the same time, Hebron is regularly regarded as a 'microcosm' of the occupation and Israel's colonial practices (Rubenberg 2003; Al Haq 2015). This is most evident in the heart of Hebron's Old City where Palestinians are confronted by the harsh reality of illegal settlers and settlements, Israeli military control, fractured or non-existent PA governance, and the de-development of its economy. What was once the thriving centre of social and economic life is now little more than a 'ghost town', a result of decades of draconian policies enforced by the Israeli military - particularly since the Second Intifada (2000-2005) that consolidated Hebron's particular geographic configuration into contrasting spaces of governance, and distinctive socio-economic and political ramifications for different Hebronite citizens. This following an Israeli imposed deterritorialisation of Hebron in 1997 into zones 'H1' and 'H2' -the former controlled by the PA and the latter by the Israeli military- with a third grey space on the H1-H2 borderland where neither the PA nor Israeli military fully administer.

As such, Hebron is a perfect entry point for a West Bank empirical study as it provides an opportunity to explore simultaneously three themes of this thesis.

⁴³ I was told this by numerous Palestinian government officials.

Firstly, as the preeminent destination for Chinese imports the Hebron experience provides important insights into the rise and impact of China-Palestine trade in general, both pre and particularly post-PER. Secondly, it highlights the principle influence of formal and informal Israeli policy over the Palestinian GFB economy. Thirdly, it is possible to see the impact on the type of trade under varying degrees of deterritorialisation in, as already mentioned, three sites of conflicting governance where the local GFB economy operates: namely, H1, secondly in the H1-H2 borderland, and thirdly in H2.

The experience of traders within each site is not, of course, homogenous, but certain features stand out showing the range of responses available in a settler colonial context in the absence of a collective strategy of resistance. I will demonstrate that individual calculus has space to adopt a spectrum of options that can, from one end, be considered as appeasing to the settler colonial reality, and to another where traders are actively confronting their coloniser. In each case, also presenting alternative perspectives on whether Palestinian GFB should only be considered through the lens of (il) licit practices (Schendel and Abraham 2005). This chapter, therefore, seeks to develop and challenge Ribeiro's core notion of GFB as primarily an act of economic survival with generally unintended practices of defiance against the powers of GFA.

This chapter will explore these different themes in the following manner. *Section One* provides further insights into the history of the Old City and how this once prominent market place has demised in parallel to an ongoing process of Israeli enforced deterritorialisation. *Section Two* explores the 'early pioneers' of China-Hebron trade who today mainly pursue their business in the new part of the city, i.e. H1, with the more privileged even considered as acquiescing to Israeli occupation. I will demonstrate this in relation to the holders of the Israeli bestowed 'Businessmen Card' (BMC). *Section Three* studies GFB in the H1-H2 borderland space on Old Al-Shallalah street. It focuses in particular on the 'Table Trader' community who come to this site to exploit the limited governance of the PA. *Section Four* goes into the heart of the Old City and into H2 to examine merchants whose engagement in trade is not just about doing business, but by physically staying as traders in the Old City market these merchants represent an example of Palestinian 'Sumud' ('steadfastness'). *Section Five* serves as a conclusion.

SECTION ONE: THE DETERRITORIALISATION OF THE HEBRON OLD MARKET

On the final stretch towards the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron's Old City the most harrowing site is the metal caging canopied the old cobbled streets where a once thriving market place stood. The cages are routinely lined with rubbish, old furniture and even bags of faeces that are dropped from the settlements above from which the traders below are unprotected. Neither the PA nor the Israeli military that controls H2 offer any form of defense. It is scarcely possible to imagine that the Old City could once have been compared with "Oxford Street" or "the busiest shopping streets in Shanghai" (Yasser Dweik, Trader, June 2018). Yet, this was how it was consistently described by the many Hebronites I interviewed – particularly those traders who had once worked in the area. Despite the apparent hopelessness of this situation it is impossible to understand the contemporary trade economy of Hebron without first considering the preeminent role of the Old City.



Figure 5 Final checkpoint to access the Ibrahimi Mosque

Built around the Ibrahimi Mosque the Old City has for generations drawn pilgrims, travelers and traders to Hebron. Some contend that Hebron's reputation as a commercial hub originates from the city being a principle stop along the Cairo-Damascus trade route (Imad Hamdan, Director of Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, June 2018). Merchants would rest and recuperate in one of the many guest hostels and bath houses in the Old City. During their stay these merchants

would bring to the Hebron market place many of the goods they had collected on their journey and local traders and service providers inevitably sought to profit from these travelers. This lay the foundation for Hebron -and specifically it's Old City- becoming, until recent decades, the West Bank's most thriving market place.



Figure 6 Rubbish dropped on the canopy above the Old City shops

The Old City market place drew Palestinians from across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to both sell and source all manner of goods. The wholesale fruit and vegetable market was a particularly important trading site for Palestinian farmers. Many traders I interviewed reminisced of the time when the daily catch of Gazan fishermen could be found in the markets of Hebron – prior to the subsequent restrictions on movement Gaza was only about one hour's drive from Hebron. At that time the main Hebron bus station was in the Old City on Al-Shuhada street – which meant passengers were dropped off in the heart of the market. This was important because as the largest city in Palestine the market was not just dependent on the local population but on the many Palestinians who came to Hebron to work, worship and shop. Indeed Israel's full annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 further aided the growth of the market place as Palestinians in Israel could now travel more freely to cities such as Hebron (see Forte 2001). For many traders in the Old City, the 1970s and early 1980s were considered as the “golden years” of trade (Field notes, June 2018):

This market area used to be the main market for every Palestinian in the West Bank and Gaza. Because they make everything here... they produce everything here... everything handmade was here - carpet, glass etc., Keffiyah, tahina, leather etc. (Jamal, Trader, June 2018).

This all began to change from the late 1960s with the steady arrival of Israeli settlers and a corresponding rise in Israel's military presence. The first Israeli settlement was Kiryat Arba established by a group of extremist settlers in 1968 on the outskirts of the Old City – since then six further settlements have emerged, each penetrating further into the heart of the Old City.⁴⁴ In order to protect the settlers and to enforce greater control over the Old City the Israeli military steadily confiscated key sites and started further regulating integral parts of Hebron's infrastructure. Many of the buildings that the Israeli military commandeered as security measures were later taken over by Israeli settlers – such as the former Palestinian boys school which is now a Jewish religious school (Yehsivat Shavei Hevron) part of the Beit Romano settlement, and a key landmark of Israeli settler and military presence in the Old City. Hebron, is thus an example of what Veracini identifies as an intended process of 'transfer' by settlers' (2010, p.49).



Figure 7 Beit Romano settlement

Palestinian resistance to Israeli presence and provocation resulted in a rise in conflict and tension in the Old City which led to recurrent instability in the market place – heightened during the First Intifada that saw a notable increase in violence and Israeli imposed curfews. But arguably, it was the Israeli military's

⁴⁴ Givat Ha'avot, Beit Hadassah, Beit Romano, Avraham Avinu and Tel Rumeida.

decision to close the main bus station on Al-Shuhada street in 1983 that signaled the demise of the Old City market place.⁴⁵ It meant that Palestinians no longer arrived in the centre of the Old City, but rather a kilometer away in the new part of the city (Hisham Sharabati, Tour Guide, June 2018). Simultaneously, the number of Israeli settlers in the Old City rose and continued to represent the more radical elements of Zionist ideology that scarcely contested, if not actively encouraged, harassment and violent attacks on Palestinians – as evidenced by a tragic event in 1994 that became the next key factor in further deterritorialising the Old City and shutting down the market.

On the 25th of February Jewish American-Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein entered the Ibrahimi Mosque on the 15th day of the holy month of Ramadan. Dressed in military uniform and carrying an assault rifle he waited for the Muslim worshippers to adopt the sujood position (kneeling down with head bowed to the ground) before opening fire - killing 29 and wounding 125. In an act clearly designed to inflict as much devastation as possible the event has since been termed the 'Ibrahimi Mosque Massacre'. In response, the Israeli military imposed harsher restrictions on the local Hebronite community.



Figure 8 Site of the former bus station

The Ibrahim Mosque was initially closed for the following months before it was then divided with part of it converted into a Jewish synagogue. Muslim worshippers were then restricted from accessing the most recently confiscated parts of the holy site, while their entrance to the mosque became more regulated

⁴⁵ The former bus station was turned into an Israeli military base that is still in operation today.

under heightened Israeli military supervision. A greater number of curfews were imposed, while military checkpoints, restricted movement and the resulting unsettled environment discouraged or even disallowed Palestinians from entering the area of the city that had been the focal point of social and economic life (Field notes, May 2018). This was most evident with the immediate and then intermittent closure of one of Hebron's principal commercial thoroughways -Al-Shuhada Street- to Palestinian vehicular traffic; full access to Israeli settlers was maintained.

It was, however, following the Hebron Protocol in 1997 -as part of the broader Oslo Accords peace process- that the Hebron Old City became formerly deterritorialised at a time when the PA was set to start regaining control over previously occupied Palestinian territories. Unlike other major Palestinian cities that were to fall under Area A and governed both administratively and from a security perspective by the PA, Hebron would be dealt with differently. There would not be a full redeployment of the Israeli military from the West Bank's largest city. Instead, 80% of Hebron would fall under PA control in H1 but 20% would remain under Israeli controlled H2 with limited administrative responsibilities still left in PA hands - at the time, the former constituted approximately 140,000 Palestinians while the latter a further 30,000 that would reside in the presence of about 500 illegal Israeli settlers and their military protectors (Reynolds 2017).⁴⁶ As the demarcation had given precedence to the location of Israeli settlements it meant much of the Old City fell under H2.

The Hebron Protocol, as with the Oslo Accords, was set to be an interim agreement designed to provide necessary steps towards PA self-governance.⁴⁷ In the case of Hebron the agreement also included measures to help stimulate local economic conditions such as the reopening of Al-Shuhada Street and the fruit and wholesale market that had been closed since 1994.⁴⁸ Yet, few of these

⁴⁶ It is difficult to access accurate data, but today, it is estimated that there are approximately 215,000 Palestinians in H1, 33,000 Palestinians in H2, 850 Israeli settlers, and up to 2000 Israeli military staff (Al Haq 2015, p.3).

⁴⁷ See 'Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron'- In accordance with the provisions of the Interim Agreement and in particular of Article VII of Annex I to the Interim Agreement.

⁴⁸ See 7. a. and b. of the Protocol - 'Normalization of Life in the Old City'.

measures materialised. Today up to 850 illegal settlers still reside in the Hebron Old City under the protection of up to 2,000 IDF soldiers, and Al-Shuhada Street and the wholesale market remain closed (Ben-Naftali et al. 2018, p.527). Although the First Intifada, the Ibrahim Mosque Massacre and the Hebron Protocol were key factors leading to the demise of the Old City market, it was nevertheless still possible for traders to maintain a small -though dwindling- degree of commercial activity into the mid-late 1990s. Rather, the final straw in the collapse of the Old City market occurred in the wake of the Second Intifada.

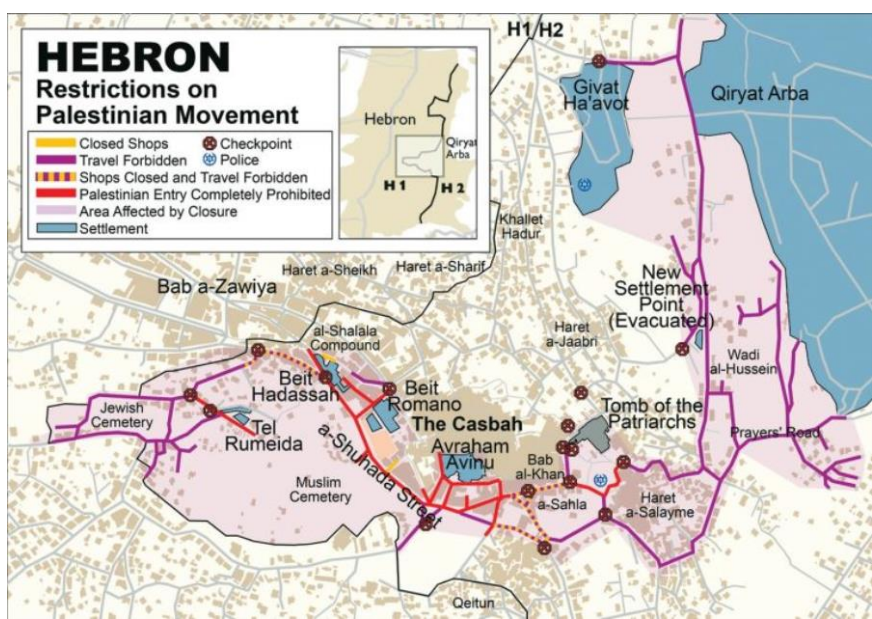


Figure 9 Map showing the various divisions of Hebron (APJP Website)

At a time of heightened instability across the oPt the Old City of Hebron was routinely subject to Israeli military enforced curfews that rendered any form of market place activity in the Old City obsolete. Often, such curfews were not even in response to local security concerns in Hebron, but were part of a policy of collective punishment when Israeli occupation was contested in other parts of the oPt. Between 2000 and 2003 there were an estimated 600 days of curfews in Hebron, and therefore, on average, the Old City was closed for almost two thirds of each year (Imad Hamdan, Hebron, June 2018).⁴⁹ Curfews ranged in intensity but generally could last from a few days to over a week during which Hebronites might not be allowed to leave their homes. The curfews were often only lifted for a matter of hours during which Hebronites could quickly seek supplies.

⁴⁹ For more information on the types of 'closure' that Israel imposed on the Palestinians during this period see Roy 2004.

For traders, the few hours available to them could only be used to check their stores and did not offer the opportunity for any credible business (Field notes, June 2018). The level of harassment and intimidation Hebronites experienced in the Old City by the Israeli military and illegal settlers increasingly discouraged visitors to the area but also made life steadily unbearable for the Palestinians who resided in H2. This resulted in local residents leaving the H2 area: in a 2007 survey about 42% of Palestinian housing units were abandoned (Feuerstein and Shulman 2007, p.14). Those remaining were often the poorest that could not afford to move to the newer parts of the city in H1 (Ibid.).

But, possibly the most damning act against the Old City market was the Israeli military ordered closure of 512 of the 1829 shops on the basis of security concerns – their doorways still walled shut until this day (Hebron Rehabilitation Committee website). In addition, the lack of commerce led to a further 1100 shop owners choosing to close their businesses (Ibid.). This tragedy is again well illustrated by the fate of Al-Shuhada Street where since 2000 onwards both Palestinians vehicles and in certain sections Palestinian pedestrians could no longer access, contributing to the subsequent closure of 304 shops and warehouses along the street (B'Tselem 2011).⁵⁰ In faded writing, it is possible to see the multitude of businesses that once existed. Instead, amongst other signs of Israeli presence, it is possible to see Israeli licenced vehicles and illegal settlers roaming Al-Shuhada Street under the protecting eye of their military in a part of Hebron that, by all intents and purposes, is no longer Palestinian.

So it was that following the Second Intifada only about 10-20% of the Old City's retail outlets remained open - leaving thousands of Hebronites previously dependent on the Old City market economy to seek economic endeavors, and in many cases survival, elsewhere.⁵¹ These conditions remain much the same today with up to twenty one permanently staffed checkpoints now restricting the movement of Palestinians, while offering comparatively free passage to settlers

⁵⁰ The potential role of Al-Shuhada Street for the social and economic revival of Hebron in general, and its Old City in particular, is paramount. For this reason it is at the centre of many activist programmes such as the 'Open Shuhada Street' campaign run by Youth Against Settlements, see: http://www.yashebron.org/open_shuhada_street

⁵¹ Personal calculations.

(UN OCHA 2019b). The Old City is referred to as a 'ghost town' where the absence of Palestinian social and economic activity has emboldened further colonising policies by settlers and the military who continue to confiscate Palestinian property with a view to annexing it under full Israeli control. Though organisations such as the local Palestinian Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC) seek to fight for the survival of the Old City, as it operates in a deterritorialised space it is limited in its ability to enforce notable change while the PA predominantly remains a comparative bystander in H1.

Indeed the absence of PA control has rendered many parts of H2 a site where local criminals seek refuge, especially in areas beyond Israeli checkpoints (Field notes, May 2018; see also Natsheh and Parizot 2015). While the remaining Hebronite residents in the area face daily acts of harassment and violence. This is evidenced by the 40,000 'incident reports' by the recently expelled Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) in their confidential 20 year report on Hebron (Blau 2018).⁵² Such volatile conditions are encapsulated by a 2014 quote from an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier's testimony about Hebron:



You're asking me where I saw violence in Hebron? That's like asking where I saw Hebron in Hebron? (Breaking The Silence 2019, p.9).

Figure 10 A deserted Al-Shuhada Street

⁵² The high rate of violence and instability found in Hebron means that it is regularly the focus of different reports by NGO's and multilateral institutions that monitor the situation in the oPt. See, for example, the website of B'Tselem and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA).

SECTION TWO: THE 'EARLY PIONEERS'

The preceding section explained how the once prosperous Old City economy declined, and the area came to be divided and deterritorialised as a result of Israeli formal and informal occupation policy. This context is important to a contemporary understanding of China-Hebron trade as the story of the first merchants to pursue this commerce, too, generally begins with the rise and demise of their economic fortunes in the Old City, followed by a notable turnaround once they started importing from China. This trader community - predominantly former manufacturers or pre-existing traders- consists mainly of what Nakhleh terms 'indigenous capitalists': Palestinians who either sustained, and in some cases started, their business under Israel's occupation since 1967 (2012). As the first to comprehensively engage in trade with China they often developed extremely profitable business ventures that depended on both formal and informal relations with the PA, and the Israeli public and private sector. This bought many of them into the post-Oslo class of 'nouveau riche' (Dana 2014a). As the area that is now H2 no longer became a viable site of profitable economic activity these traders are now mainly found in the 'New City' area of Hebron - H1.

I present the story of Yasser Dweik and his family's business experience which are not uncommon to Hebronite traders representative of this period; their story serves as evidence of the challenges and opportunities confronting merchants under Israeli occupation. Thereafter, I consider a particular feature of some of the most prosperous and 'privileged' members of this business community. Specifically, the provision of a 'Businessman Card' (BMC) that, on the one hand, can be deemed as a coping strategy for businessmen that seek to make the best of a challenging business environment, to the other, where accepting a BMC can be considered a tool of co-option by the colonial occupier through the rewarding of a select group of Palestinian economic elite. In the latter instance, drawing attention to the broader political dynamics of doing business under colonial conditions, and the strategies adopted to shape the behaviour of the colonised.

2.1. A HEBRON TOY STORY

In the mid-1950s and at the age of about fourteen Yasser's father started to gain his first experience in the trade sector as a helper in a small garments shop in the Old City. His father had done this for around fifteen years before finding a job at a local Bank of Jordan – he thought that this might offer more long term stability and wealth. But, soon after Israel's full occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the bank was closed by the Israeli authorities who instead only allowed the Israeli Bank Leumi to operate in the oPt as part of a broader scheme to impose full control over the Palestinian monetary sector (Samara 2000, p.39).⁵³ And so, with his savings and knowledge of commerce his father opened his own shop in the Old City in 1968 selling accessories and ladies garments. As Israeli's (both Jewish and Palestinian) were now able to visit the oPt more easily and Hebron was particularly popular due to its size and religious significance to both Muslims and Jews, the Hebron market place quickly expanded as Israeli customers could experience first-hand the often sizeable price differences between the Israeli and Palestinian market place.

As the principle market hub of the West Bank, Hebronite traders in the Old City were positioned to become some of the most commercially prosperous merchants in Palestine. This provided them a sizeable advantages going into the post-PER era as their level of financial capital amassed over recent decades vastly superseded most Palestinians, thus enabling them to more easily explore international trade. This is why the majority of today's most successful Hebronite traders have their roots in the Old City:

Most of those wealthy people around Hebron started from Old city. Either themselves, their parents or grandparents. (Imad Hamdan, June 2018).

As with other traders the majority of goods his father sold were sourced directly from Israel or through Israeli intermediaries, but very soon he was travelling overseas to explore the international market. This included trips to Thailand,

⁵³ Within the first two months of the occupation all Arab, Palestinian and foreign banks were closed and thirty six branches of Israeli commercial banks were opened.

Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 1970s accompanied by his Israeli business partner from Jerusalem who would mediate this trade as he -like most other Palestinians- did not have an import license. As with those mentioned in the previous chapter, he started sourcing goods that were originally from China but re-labelled. His father's visit to Asia gave him an important insight into how much Palestinian traders were often being taken advantage of by Israeli intermediaries and sowed the seed for a desire to start importing directly the moment the opportunity arose – i.e. following the signing of the PER (Interview notes, June 2018).

In 1986 his father took over another shop in the Old City and was by then a recognised wholesaler across the West Bank. This allowed him to send Yasser to the UK to receive further education but also to improve his English as he felt that this would be important to help develop the family business. During Yasser's time away the First Intifada steadily engulfed the oPt and business became unstable as Israeli consumers came less to the Hebron market place and Israel-Palestine trade on the whole was challenged.⁵⁴ The First Intifada also became one of the first notable periods when traders in the Old City were challenged by insecurity and Israeli enforced curfews. The long term viability of the Old City market place was now in question. Initially, Yasser's father closed his shop in 1991 and moved to another site on the then outskirts of the Old City– near the current H1 and H2 division. But even there business was not sustainable and by 2001 the family made a decision to move again even further afield to the rapidly expanding area now referred to as the 'New City' of Hebron –in H1. The most recent move was heavily dictated by the disastrous ramifications of the Second Intifada that -as discussed in *Section One*- virtually eliminated any viable commercial prospects in the Old City:

So many problems there, lots of stone throwing, shootings, killing, tear gas. People wanted safe places to buy and go. (Yasser Dweik, June 2018).

The movement of traders to outside of the Old City and to the more stable and predictable environment of H1 was part of a broader expansion of the city of

⁵⁴ This included a relatively active boycott of Israeli products by Palestinians. For more information see: Dana 2014b; Burton 2016c.

Hebron that was heightened in the aftermath of the Second Intifada. At first, the 'New City' did not constitute much beyond the outskirts of the Old City, while nowadays, it sprawls far to the north of the city (away from H2) and includes business, government and residential areas. As Palestinians -both from Hebron and those visiting- increasingly preferred to avoid the Old City the New City became the principle commercial hub of Hebron. The demand for land and shop space in a once sparse area intensified. This is reflected in the cost to buy or rent a shop. For example, while in the Old City many traders are paying as little as 23 Jordanian Dinar (JD) a month in rent, on the busy Ein-Sarah Street in the New City a trader might have to pay a million NIS to be granted access to a shop space, and another 50,000 NIS a year in rent (Field notes, June 2018). Such a level of investment is far beyond the reach of many Palestinians and is why most of those that own shops in the New City either moved to the area shortly after the Old City became untenable and rents in the New City were still affordable, or are new shops opened by the successful traders from the mid-1990s - often managed by extended members of a single family. This context is important when considering *Section Three* of this chapter as it highlights why many less wealthy Palestinians seeking economic opportunity as traders are today being forced back into the Old City.

By the time Yasser's father moved to the New City the family business had established itself as one of the most active wholesalers in the West Bank. At this time Yasser had returned from the UK and had steadily taken control of the business - this included going to China from the mid-1990s to import directly. Like his father he first went to Hong Kong but was soon after encouraged by his suppliers to visit their factories in China. Yasser made a decision to broaden the family business to include toys while he also helped his relatives to either maintain the traditional family business or seek new ventures. His three brothers, all frequent visitor to Yiwu, each manage at least one shop selling accessories, and after Yasser took his cousin to China on three occasions his cousin opened a clothing outlet. In total, his family now have about twenty shops in Hebron's New City and his shop alone supplies to about fifty other wholesalers and retailers in the West Bank; prior to the heightened movement restrictions of recent years he also sent goods to Gaza. Such expansion, highlights the extent of commercial gain that was available to Palestinians who were able to exploit early China-

Palestine trade, how the trade sector -and business sector in Palestine in general- is intricately tied across familial networks, and why Hebron has remained the hub for current day globalised Palestinian trade (see Nasr 2004, p.172).

And so, by the late 1990s-early 2000s the Hebron market place was increasingly dominated by Chinese goods. A phenomenon led by Palestinians who had already achieved comparative success as manufacturers or merchants in the Old City - thus equipping them with the funds to explore international trade. They were able to monopolise the local market at a time when Palestinian consumers were keen to diversify their consumption towards more affordable products (Field notes, May 2018).

Moreover, with an acumen for trade and a comparatively ill-informed consumer base the lucrative profit margins of importing from China meant that almost overnight many of these traders -as part of a broader transformation of Palestinian society that witnessed the enlargement of its middle class- were able to propel themselves into the echelons of the post-PER 'nouveau riche' (Dana 2014a; see also Hilal 2015, p.357). However, the ability of the most successful of these early traders to achieve and sustain such heightened levels of prosperity - while the majority of Palestinians faced greater struggle in the post-PER period- naturally raises questions as to their status and experience under Israeli occupation, and their role in Israel's colonial strategy.

2.2. NORMALISATION FROM 'BELOW'

The 'indigenous capitalists' I am concerned with are less critiqued than more prominent Palestinian capitalists that have exploited positions of power and influence in the post-PER era (Amundsen and Ezbidi 2002; Binder 2007; Bouillon 2004; Dana 2014a; 2019; Nasr 2004; Nakhleh 2012). In the latter case, such actors are often regarded as a crony and corrupt new capitalist elite that act in a manner of 'concession' and 'acquiescence' to continued 'colonial occupation' as the benefits they access are invariably dictated by close ties to the PA, and importantly, to Israel and its colonial policies that are otherwise damaging to most Palestinians (Nakhleh 2012; Clarno 2017; Dana 2019). As such, their co-opting is intertwined with a broader policy to mitigate resistance against Israel's settler

colonial goals, while retaining local political stability through their support of, and dependence upon, the PA. This comparatively new class of Palestinian capitalists who emerged in the Oslo era primarily consist of: a returning business diaspora with a history of close relations with the PA; traditional elites who were often landowners; and others who gained wealth as commercial intermediaries with Israel post the 1967 occupation (Hanieh 2013, p.111). Palestine's expansive NGO sector that is extensively funded, and subsequently guided by the remit of international donors, has also led to the rise of an elite in this sector (Clarno 2017, p.98; see also Hammami 1995; Hanafi and Tabar 2005).

This phenomenon has paralleled the wider post-Oslo pursuit of peace dividends that is -supposedly- bolstered by heightened 'economic normalisation'; an approach heavily supported by Israel and international actors, and that has been increasingly guided by neoliberal policy making (Dana 2019). Palestine's client state like status that emerged post-Oslo means that such a model of economic development is, however, subject to Israeli "consent" which demands a "political price", while also needing to be conducive to Israel's own economic interests (Hanieh 2013 p.111; See also Dana 2015a; 2015b). As such, the prospective rewards of the Palestinian economic and political elite under such conditions is structurally dependent upon occupation and settler colonialism (Grandinetti 2015, p.65). Unsurprisingly, the pursuit of associated forms of 'economic normalisation', often under the guise of 'economic peace', are regarded by activists of Palestinian liberation as one of the worse forms of concession to occupation and colonial colonisation.⁵⁵

It is possible to see that in the case of many Hebronite traders who became active importers of Chinese goods that they too are not completely removed from the acquiescence of 'economic collaboration', and by virtue ongoing 'colonial occupation' through their de-facto participation in acts of supposed 'economic peace'. Though these actors are not representative of the, for example, private or public monopolies that Dana cites as examples of Palestinian crony corruption

⁵⁵ For example, the 2012 denouncement by the Palestinian Boycott Divestment and Sanction (BDS) in relation to the economic cooperation between Palestinian business tycoon Mr. Bashar Masri and the Israeli government and private sector.

(2019, p.9), nevertheless, they are regularly driven more by economic, rather than political concerns in their approach towards business in the oPt and with Israel. This generally derives from their early success as traders that resulted in them developing more formal economic, and also personal, connections with their Israeli counterparts - indeed their success was often dependent on such connections (Field notes, April 2019).

But unlike higher profile forms of economic collaboration such as joint industrial zones or Palestinian investment in Israel and Israeli settlements, I contend that many of the more privileged early traders are a more bottom up form of 'economic normalisation'. These traders can be shown by Israel as proof that Israel wants economic prosperity in the oPt and is keen to do business with Palestinians - though the reality is that this constitutes only a minute proportion of the Palestinian population. Importantly, the success of these Palestinian businessmen and their perspectives towards Israel is often down to both local political stability and an Israeli governed status quo which has rewarded them privileged access to opportunities that most Palestinians lack (Hilal 2015, p.258). Such lucrative gains that are pre-eminently determined by Israel contribute towards the de-politicisation -in practice if not rhetoric- of this indigenous economic class, in doing so, it reinforces Israel's colonial occupation.

As such, even though it is important to frame their trading practices within broader coping strategies of conducting business under challenging colonial conditions, I propose that their heightened interdependence with Israel can also be regarded as (il) legal, and therefore inverting the conventional notion that GFB activity is predominantly considered as (il) licit (see Schendel and Abraham 2015).⁵⁶ Rather, (il) legal represents a condition that are formerly 'legal' but socially 'illicit', as many Palestinians -including other businessmen- do not support the depth of their ties with Israel and as the benefits these traders can access go beyond those available to a regular Palestinian - including 'privileges' bestowed on them by Israel (often in collaboration with the PA) which are generally deemed as tools of colonial acquiescence, or "economic pacification techniques" directed at elites who are dependent upon stability (Dana 2019, p.6).

⁵⁶ Schendel and Abraham argue that (il) legal practices are predominantly found in cases of crony capitalism and failed states (2015, p.20-21)

One particular example is the 'Businessman Card' (BMC) that many of them hold - an ID that provides comparatively unrestricted access into Israel. As access to this card has often come about as a direct result of commerce with China, it gives further weight to the need to understand the impact of China-Palestine trade relations. I must though stress that the following analysis does not just include BMC holders in Hebron, as findings from my other interviews with BMC holders across the West Bank provides a more holistic commentary on this issue.

2.3. THE BUSINESSMAN CARD (BMC)

Since the earliest phases of Zionist expansion, the provision of various 'IDs', or 'permits', and their associated capacity to facilitate movement have been used by Israel to dictate Palestinian socio-economic possibilities; such as the ability to travel for employment opportunities, visit family, or to even remain in Palestine (Abu-Zahra and Kay 2013). As a tool of colonial control also found in, for example, early Canadian and Australian history, the use of IDs to dictate movement has, unsurprisingly, also informed policies to coerce Palestinians and, in many instances, seek their collaboration (Ibid., 66-83).⁵⁷ Sadly, this has often also encouraged a phenomenon of Palestinians "policing" Palestinians as a means to protect themselves from the risk of losing particular entitlements, such as one's own ID, but also to exploit the potential privileges offered by the Israeli authorities (Ibid., 79).

This form of bio-political control has, therefore, played a key role in regulating Palestinian behaviour while contributing to the subdivision of Palestinians into 'high' and 'low' risk (Parsons and Salter 2008, p. 712-13). The withholding of permits a mechanism to punish those that are deemed a threat to Israel and its colonial practices (often including their family and friends) while the provision of permits can be a reward for acquiescence, and in some cases collaboration. The permit system has, therefore, been adopted by the Israeli authorities as primarily a regime of privilege, rather than one informed by individual rights, as a

⁵⁷ Abu-Zahra and Kay (2013 p.6) comment on the use of the "pass system" in Canada that restricted the movement of the native population to their 'reserves' while also inspiring the adoption of a similar policy in Apartheid South Africa (see also Barron 1988).

mechanism to force Palestinian reliance on the “grace and goodwill of the ruler” (Berda 2017, p.40; see also Al-Qadi 2018). Directed by such a rationale, unsurprisingly, Israel has engaged the senior Palestinian business community through the provision of the Businessman Card (BMC) as a further colonial act of co-opting elite members of the indigenous population.

Importantly, though from anecdotal insights there is certainly scope to explore some BMC holders through the prism of ‘collaboration’ in its most damaging forms, I stress that such a paradigm is not how I approach these actors in my following analysis. Rather, I consider their role more broadly not, for example, as collaborators that inform on fellow Palestinians, but individuals whom Israel privileges to ensure ongoing economic benefits to its public and private sector, and to co-opt as a practice to show the potential rewards of acquiescing to Israel’s colonial practices under the guise of frameworks such as ‘economic peace’ – the benefits to these Palestinians invariably dependent on favourable behaviour.

There are approximately 300 Hebronites, out of about 2400 traders in total (a mere 2.8% of the West Bank work force)⁵⁸ who hold a Business Man Card (BMC) - a unique ID approved by the Israeli ‘Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories’ (COGAT) based on the initial approval and recommendation of the PA.⁵⁹ Formally, these individuals must meet a certain financial status that is mainly the result of their economic ties with Israel. It is often defined by the value of their commercial transactions with Israeli companies. Holding a BMC enables the cardholder at any time and via any civilian checkpoint to enter Israel.

A recently introduced policy has also allowed approved BMC holders to enter Israel with their Palestinian license plated vehicle.⁶⁰ To date, some BMC have

⁵⁸ The total West Bank workforce in Q4 2017 was 849,700 (PCBS figures).

⁵⁹ For more detail on the different type of permits please see: ‘Unclassified Status of Palestinians: Authorizations of Entry into Israel, their Passage between Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip and their Travel Abroad (Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, Operations and Coordination Department)’.

⁶⁰ Palestinian license plates are green whereas Israeli are yellow. A Palestinian license plate would therefore be very obvious if seen in Israel. Unlike yellow plates that are seen across the oPt as Israeli’s have comparatively free movement throughout the oPt..

refused this offer, those I interviewed preferred to see how the initiative plays out as they were slightly concerned by the negative attention they might get while driving with a green Palestinian plate in Israel - a considerably rare sight. A perspective validated by my own experience of driving in a Palestinian plated car in northern Israel with a BMC holder. On this occasion passers-by were more interested in taking pictures, but the BMC holder mentioned that at other times the looks directed towards the car were noticeably unsettling (Field notes, Sept. 2017).

As BMC holders can easily enter Israel they can undertake key business procedures in Israel which would otherwise be more restricted. For example, in addition to allowing regular and face to face interaction with Israeli business partners, it enables them to travel to Israeli ports of entry so that they can oversee the processing of their goods.⁶¹ But generally, the main considered benefit of the BMC is the holders ability to travel out of Israeli airports. As there are no operational airports in the West Bank or Gaza Strip many traders must set aside at least one to two full days for border crossing procedures to fly out of Amman, Jordan. BMC holders -and their direct family members who are also entitled to privileged access- can receive approval within 24-48 hours to travel from Israel, requiring just over an hour to get to Tel Aviv Ben Gurion airport, saving time and money. Unlike the more frequent and often humiliating experience of leaving via the Allenby Bridge as endured by other Palestinians, BMC holders are often treated more respectfully at the airport.⁶²

I noted in my observation of many BMC holders -significantly, in Hebron and other parts of the West Bank- that by being able to avoid many of the obstacles faced by other Palestinians, and in general being treated less discriminatorily, they are able to go about their daily business with seemingly less angst towards Israel. BMC holders I interviewed were politically conscious of the challenges between

⁶¹ This is incredibly valuable as the majority of Palestinian traders must rely purely on Israeli brokers, or Palestinian brokers who in turn must hire an Israeli broker (as stipulated by the PER). This not only limits the traders control over one of the most vital stages of importing, but leaves numerous opportunities for these traders to be scammed by both Palestinian and Israeli brokers.

⁶² This is, however, not guaranteed, as many BMC holder still claimed that they would often be singled out at Ben Gurion airport. In general, if they were travelling with their family they tended to be processed with less delay.

Israel and Palestine, but were consistently able to see Israel and specifically the Israeli business community in a more positive light, while prioritising their business interests over politics. This is somewhat indicative of an increasingly “individualistic” and “private concern” oriented Palestinian population with a diminished commitment to national liberation (Dana 2014a). In so doing, also mitigating the possibility for collective resistance under the twin challenges of settler colonialism and the capitalistic values of neoliberalism (Hilal 2015, p. 351):

A businessman must stay far from politics. It will not help his business.
(Trader, October 2017).

Many BMC holders speak or have at least a basic understanding of Hebrew and have established longstanding business and subsequent social ties with the Jewish Israeli's with whom they work with. On occasion, some BMC holders have even stated a preference and trust in doing business with Israelis than with Palestinians. This also included a distinction between Jewish Israeli's and Palestinian Citizens of Israel, seemingly distrusting the latter over the former, and in general, they emphasised the clear distinction between their Israeli business partners and the Israeli state:

In politics and occupation Israel is racist, but in business they are straight. If you have built trust with them they are good. They do not cheat you. They will do what they say. If they say they will deliver it by May they will do it. If an Arab says this they might deliver it the next year. (Trader, October 2017).

I particularly found that younger BMC holders (none interviewed in Hebron), such as those that gained this privilege from their parent's business were even more removed from concerns of Israeli occupation. In fact, the ease by which they can travel -often having never experienced the types of restrictions faced by other Palestinians- motivated them to regularly spend their leisure time in Israel. For example, though many BMC holders limit their visits into Israel to business, I found that younger BMC holders might travel to Israel for the weekend. Sometimes to visit family members that still reside there, but often to socialise with Jewish Israeli's they have befriended through business, or simply for leisure,

spending hundreds of shekels on five star hotels and going to expensive restaurants (Field notes, May 2018).

Such practices are indicative of what Grandinetti identifies as the Palestinian and Israeli elite's promulgation of a 'moderate' Palestinian middle class that perceives neoliberal capitalism and consumerism as a method of resistance. Yet, this example of Palestinian modernity depoliticises how economic development -or lack of- is ultimately governed by the occupation (2015). The paradox between smaller scale traders despairing of the impact of occupation on their lives and business was possibly most stark when I heard such stories.

2.4. THE BMC AS AN (IL) LEGAL TOOL OF ECONOMIC PEACE

The BMC is, unsurprisingly, a source of contention in the Palestinian community that is overwhelmingly exempt from this 'privilege'. It is important to stress that many traders I interviewed were entitled to apply for a BMC but refused to do so – including Yasser who I introduced earlier. Their rationale varied but it was often an unwillingness to be a pawn in a policy that facilitates certain Palestinians but did little to help the Palestinian struggle at large. This included a sense that every Palestinian should have this 'privilege' if there was to be viable peace and as it is still possible to do business without a BMC they wished to be like other Palestinians - also preferring not to be stigmatised as being "close" or "friends of Israel" (Trader, Hebron, May 2018).

To many, the BMC also represents a case of PA corruption and collusion. This is because the BMC is initially approved by the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs and it is well known that many businessmen who should have the right to a BMC are often refused, while smaller traders (and even non-traders) often receive a BMC due to their connections (Field notes, May 2018). As such, it provides a further case of how the PA also uses its privileged position to co-opt local elites as a method to consolidate its own political control (see Dana 2019):

I have many friends who are traders who don't get it! They say for security reasons, but he's good, I have a friend with millions and didn't get it! But I know smaller traders who have it! (Trader, Ramallah, June 2018).

But more importantly, though the BMC has an economic benefit to Israel as it ensures that its own traders can gain from the captive market of Palestinians whose consumption is often mediated by BMC holding businessmen, the BMC can be regarded as a prime example of Israel selectively imparting benefits to a small group of the Palestinian population in a strategy to suppress political resistance. This is because a Palestinian with a negative record will not be approved a BMC while their future business interests will also be tied to them avoiding activity that could flag them as a threat to Israel – they must be “clean” (Trader, Hebron, May 2019).

I interviewed a prominent Hebronite trader that had never been granted a BMC due to “security” concerns. This businessman believed that it was probably the result of him being politically active while he was at university during the First Intifada. Importantly, such vetting could naturally go beyond the BMC holder themselves, but with whom they associate and the way they run their business, for example, their family members and those they employed.⁶³ As a Palestinian researcher commented to me, in essence, Israel are “buying their ignorance” (June 2018)! For such reasons, some traders also stated to me that the provision of a BMC is a sign that

Israel needs you, but if they don’t need you then no BMC. (Trader, Hebron, May 2018).

and they therefore do not wish to be associated to it. As such, for traders that access and exploit the benefits of the BMC this practice can be deemed as (il) legal because though it is formerly ‘legal’, for many Palestinians such levels of interdependence with Israel are deemed ‘illicit’. In a sense, maintaining close ties with Israel or obtaining a BMC is dependent on a Palestinian becoming -at least rhetorically- de-politicised while normalising the occupation.

From a BMC holders perspective such economic ties are, however, regularly deemed not only inevitable but the only feasible pathway to commercial gain. In the absence of sovereign control over the Palestinian economy it is considered

⁶³ For more information on how the denial of a permit can be influenced by a Palestinians family, extended contacts or associations, see Berda 2017.

only natural that they pursue business with their most viable option – the Israeli market (Field notes, April 2019). The BMC is, thus, part of a broader coping strategy under otherwise challenging conditions. Indeed, such commercial ties and their affiliated social relationships are deemed as the possibilities of facilitating peace through economics. Even though BMC holders regularly recognised that such economic peace can only be a contributing factor to a broader political peace plan – something that has so far been absent (Ibid.):

I go to Tel Aviv and eat dinner with my Israeli business partners. We talk, we laugh. We do not have problems with them. We don't need conflict. We show that Israeli's and Palestinians can have peace. But yes, I am afraid that some of the younger Palestinians cannot see this. They only see Israeli's as something bad. (Trader, Hebron, May 2019).

The stories and experiences above are of course not limited to Palestinian businessmen who are just traders, nor ones that predominantly import from China. As mentioned, there are far more prominent Palestinian business men who have dictated and monopolised various segments of the Palestinian economy since the PER. But the type of traders who are the focus of this section, provide another relevant insight into how the PER created not only new economic actors but also ones that thereafter became increasingly intertwined with Israel from both an economic and social perspective. A phenomenon that has been aided by Israeli policies to benefit those it deems as serving positive commercial and political interests, such as through the provision of the BMC. For many traders, it has been the importation of Chinese goods that has set them on course for both economic prosperity, but also this unique status in the hierarchy of Palestinians as seen by Israel.

The BMC holders of course represent a marginal number of Palestinians, let alone Hebronites, who are engaged in China-Palestine trade. Yet, they give a good insight into those who have been most able to exploit this commerce since the PER and how, for some, it has contributed to the shaping of both their economic and political identity. Most of these traders based their success from their history in the Old City but can now be found more prominently as actors in the New City where there are more opportunities for economic gain. The Old City

has instead been left to the fortunes of varying degrees of Israeli occupation and the associated deterritorialisation of PA governance. Those that now trade there are an amalgamation of economic actors that operate at a scale far below that of the 'early pioneers'.

As one enters the outskirts of the Old City, the first market they enter is the bustling Old Al-Shallalah Street that straddles the border between H1 and H2. As it is not fully in H2 the market is still able to draw customers while not being fully governed as H1 it is possible to engage in more (il) licit trade activity that appeals to those wishing to operate under the radar to maximise profit. As such it is a key site for Palestinians who pursue trade in mainly cheap and poor quality Chinese goods as their chosen avenue for economic survival. These Palestinians are what I term 'Table Traders', who see little other opportunities in Hebron as a result of both Israeli occupation and the inadequacy of the PA.

SECTION THREE: THE 'TABLE TRADERS' IN THE H1-H2 GREY ZONE

As recently as the 1970s Old Al-Shallalah Street was not only considered the outskirts of the Old City but also the fringe of the city of Hebron. Beyond the area that is now the Bab Al-Zawiya roundabout lay predominantly agricultural land and a few homes and factories (Field notes, May 2018). There was limited commercial justification for a trader to locate themselves so far from the main market near the Ibrahimi Mosque. But, with the natural growth and competition for space in the Old City traders started to invest in stores along this street. By the 1990s commerce in the area started to grow as consumers increasingly sought to avoid the heart of the Old City where there were more Israeli soldiers and settlers. As Hebron's main bus station had now been moved out of the Old City and was now only a few hundred metres from Old Al-Shallalah Street, shoppers visiting Hebron no longer needed to pass through the original Old City market. But, within a few years later the fortunes of Old Al-Shallalah Street became increasingly intertwined with the complexities of Hebron's particular geographic sub-divisions and the heightened instability experienced across the city, particularly in the Old City. Old Al-Shallalah Street subsequently became a contested site caught in an increasingly deterritorialised state where heightened (il) licit trade was both possible, and to a certain degree encouraged.

3.1. THE DE-FACTO DETERRITORIALISATION OF OLD AL-SHALLALAH STREET - “AUTHORITY MAYBE COME AND WALK BUT DO NOTHING!”

In the first instance, the division between PA controlled H1 and Israeli controlled H2 in 1997 formally dissected Old Al-Shallalah Street. As such, the area became a common site of conflict between the Israeli military and protesting Palestinians. During the Second Intifada Old Al-Shallalah Street was often a site of gunfire, tear gas and rock throwing. The Israeli military routinely put in large concrete blocks and patrolled the area that was -as with the heart of the Old City- often under heightened levels of curfew. Some of the shops in the H2 part of Old Al-Shallalah Street are those that were closed by Israeli military order. Until today, the entrance of the street at the Bab Al-Zawiya roundabout is often the site of clashes - in particular after Friday prayers. As such, to be a trader on Old Al-Shallalah Street has been particularly challenging as at any moment a merchant might have to evacuate the area and abandon their business.



Figure 11 In front of the Bab Al-Zawiya roundabout

At the same time, it is this instability that has in recent years allowed the street to become a heightened site of (il) licit trade. Although the majority of the street lies in H1, the PA shows little interest in enacting any concerted form of governance. But rather, prefer to leave it as a grey zone seemingly to avoid coming into too close a contact with the Israeli military that are heavily present from the official H1-H2 divide onwards. This means that most of the street can be regarded as de-facto deterritorialised with Palestinian traders comparatively removed from the

control of the PA - even though the PA governs more extensively not even a hundred metres away by Bab Al-Zawiya. As one trader stated, “there is no authority, here is no-man’s land” (Anonymous Trader, June 2018).

It was interesting that often when I asked Hebronites -i.e. not just traders- to help me to identify the demarcation of H1-H2 they would often not know or refer me to the Bab-Al-Zawiya roundabout and only with additional prompting specify the official location of the divide further down Old Al-Shallalah Street (Field notes, April 2019). This is not necessarily surprising as once prominent road signs and even painted lines on the ground that marked the H1-H2 divide have either been removed or have been allowed to fade away. It was also insightful to ask traders on Old Al-Shallalah whether they felt any sense of being governed by the PA. Though some acknowledged that on occasion PA officials might walk down the street, and in recent years there has even been rumour of the government proposing the removal of the Table Traders, but as “nobody cares about this place, nobody comes here” and “they forget us” (both in reference to the PA) by all intents and purposes the traders feel “free” (Trader, June 2018).

It is also evident when considering how the market is managed and regulated as it is generally left to the traders themselves. Some of the more senior or longer term merchants claim to act as mediators on controversial issues such as acts of theft or arguments with customers, or even between traders. But if required, it is often the elders of some of the more prominent families that help to resolve any conflict in the area, although more frequently in this comparatively close knit market space traders can resolve any issues amongst themselves (Field notes, April 2019). Either way, the unanimous sentiment was that few felt that the PA had a relevant role in managing the affairs of Old Shallalah Street and that it was more practical and desired for matters to be settled without the PA (Ibid.).

This is not necessarily uncommon as across Palestine (including the Palestinian communities inside Israel) familial and community forms of conflict resolution common throughout the Arab world, such as one termed ‘Sulha’, are often deployed, especially in the absence of credible judicial process by neither the PA

nor the Israeli authorities (Jabbour 1996).⁶⁴ Indeed, the adoption of varying forms of governance within informal trade communities is common worldwide, and highlights that the world of GFB should not be assumed as disorderly and ungoverned, but can in fact be highly self-regulatory so as to maximise efficiency and to promulgate collective interests (De Soto 2002; Neuwirth 2011; Alba Vega 2012; Spector 2017). While the fact that the PA avoids the area means that it furthermore de-legitimises itself as having a capacity or authority to govern, thus empowering the local trader community to establish its own norms of (il) licit activity (e.g., Humphreys and Skvirskaja 2009; Aguiar 2013)

From a trade perspective the deterritorialisation of Old Shallalah Street means that for traders that do not have a registered shop they can conduct their trade comparatively unregulated. This includes not declaring any of their sales, not paying any taxes associated to their trade, and as they do not formally inhabit any space they do not pay rent, nor any utilities (Field Notes, June 2018). Such dynamics of GFB commerce are similarly reflected in 'peddler' trade communities found in urban centres in both the developed and developing world where local governments allow for informal activity to prevail in, supposedly, otherwise formal surrounding (Shepherd 2012; Aguiar 2013). Though importantly, in such cases, it is not an external colonial actor that is forcing these conditions.



Figure 12 Table Traders on Old Al-Shallalah Street

⁶⁴ For examples of the application of Sulha in Palestinian communities in Israel see: Shihade 2012; Saxon 2018.

As a result, Old Al-Shallalah Street not only attracts traders that seek to exploit the limited PA governance but it is also a site where the PA can encourage informal street traders to locate. The street is a now congested space where the sides are lined by registered shops while almost every inch between is dominated by Table Traders selling all manner of goods on tables that are intricately aligned in the morning and removed at night. It is these table vendors that are the focus of this section as many constitute the group of Palestinians that are forced into this sector for often basic economic gain - many without an extensive background in commerce. The Table Traders, of course, do not constitute a single category of actors, but many are intricately tied to the Old City as former shop owners or their second or third generation offspring. It is first necessary to introduce this group of former Old City merchants, as their experience provides important context to the emergence of table trade on Old Al-Shallalah street in general.

3.2. THE FIRST TABLE TRADERS

The rise of Table Traders on Old Al-Shallalah Street is directly linked to the demise of the Old City in the aftermath of the Second Intifada. This is because many of the first Table Traders were former Old City merchants. But, unlike those -such as the 'early pioneers'- who were able to adjust and pursue new ventures, for some, the closure of the Old City was completely detrimental and left them with limited avenues to recover. This was often the case with traders who were not as financially stable, for example, those that did not have another business to fall back upon, did not own land outside of the Old City, and in some cases, whose goods were destroyed by settlers (Field notes, June 2018).

For many of these traders the only path to economic survival was to set up unregistered street stalls by the Manara Roundabout in the 'New City' area of Hebron. Initially, the municipality allowed this type of activity as it recognised the desperate need of these vendors but by the mid-2000s the traders were encouraged to return to the Old City. This was, in part, due to the gradual cessation of instability after the Second Intifada, but also the government's desire to promote organised development of the new city and the promotion of more formal commerce. But, for many, it was not possible to return as their shops remained sealed under Israeli military order or were in parts of the Old City where

there was limited viability to receive regular business. The alternative was to set up street stalls along Old Al-Shallalah street as it was in a predominantly non-Israeli controlled area and still attracted relatively consistent consumer flow (Ibid.). As many of the traders with shops along the street were sympathetic to the struggling returnees their presence was minimally challenged.

Mohamad is an example of such a trader. In the 1970s his father had two shops in the Old City which Mohamad took control of from the 1980s when he was about eighteen. Instability during the First Intifada was a challenge for him to maintain his business as settlers would often damage his goods, but it was in the aftermath of the Second Intifada that his fortunes as a trader truly crumbled. In 2000 the Israeli military closed his shops and soon after settlers set fire to them and burnt them down. Sadly, the tragedies of the Second Intifada went even deeper for members of his family as his uncle, then aged seventy, was also killed. With no business in the Old City he was one of the first to sell on stalls in the New City before coming to Old Al-Shallalah Street in 2005.

As an Old City trader who had lost his shop the local government originally promised to support him financially, but today he does not receive anything. Instead he relies upon the inconsistent income from selling low quality and cheap trousers that are made in China. The first day we met, he had only made 150 NIS (~\$40). Indeed, these traders, once supporting the commerce of locally manufactured products as was common in the Old City, increasingly rely on the trade in cheap Chinese goods which are not only the predominant products available in the market but often all that they can afford. Mohamad goes to a local wholesaler and buys a small supply of goods – never too many but enough to make his table seem as if it has some variety to offer potential consumers. Having never worked in any other trade and noting no other viable opportunity for him, this is all he feels he can do to survive economically.

Although less fortunate Old City traders initially accounted for many of the first Table Traders on Old Al-Shallalah Street, Mohamad believes that this is no longer so. Today, the Table Traders are now an amalgamation of economic actors often with varying backgrounds – though in almost every case young men from both Hebron or nearby villages.

3.3. THE NEW ENTRANTS

Many are the second or third generation offspring of former Old City traders such as Mohamad. Often they grew up learning about commerce from their parents and helped to sell goods from before they were even teenagers. These traders predominantly constitute the estimated ten different families that dominate the Table Traders, each with multiple tables run by various brothers and cousins (Field notes, April 2019). As such, they are part of a broader network of family traders who seek to exploit any viable site for economic gain. But Table Traders nowadays also include Palestinians with comparatively little background in the trade sector, but see it as having one of the lowest entry points to hopefully making a small living. It is difficult to stereotype these new traders but those I interviewed included, but were not limited to, the following: those who earlier worked in Israel but either no longer had access or were unwilling to continue the often-humiliating grind of travelling into Israel; recent graduates who did not find sufficient opportunities in either the public or private sector; former employees of wholesalers and retailers who recognised that they could make more money by becoming traders themselves; and some who had attempted to become formal traders but could not afford a shop and so reverted to such unregistered commerce (Field notes, June 2018).

As most are young men, often without higher education, it is important to stress that being a Table Trader is also heavily tied to their inability to find more profitable work in Israel. For example, the provision of labour permits is generally restricted to minimum age requirements and marital status (Field notes, May 2019).⁶⁵ In some cases, young Table Traders are on the Israeli 'black list' which rules out any chance of being approved (see Berda 2017): In 2016-17 out of the 67,940 permits applied for in Hebron 19,540 were denied (Al-Qadi 2018, p.9).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The range of restrictions depend on the permit type and are subject to change. For examples, as of August 2019, a Palestinian seeking work in the Israeli construction sector needs to be twenty two years old and married. For the full range of available permits and their associated preconditions see: 'Unclassified Status of Palestinians: Authorizations of Entry into Israel, their Passage between Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip and their Travel Abroad (Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, Operations and Coordination Department)'.
⁶⁶ These figures do not include permits for work in settlements.

A consistent theme throughout was that they did not feel that there were other viable opportunities for them to make a suitable living in the oPt; the absence of employment opportunities in industry and manufacturing in Hebron following decades of de-development was regularly cited. In the cases that they had earlier found work in other vocations -generally low skilled employment- the salaries were normally insufficient for the high living costs they faced – most stressed the pressure of needing to earn not just for themselves, but also their family (Field notes, June 2018).⁶⁷ It was also not always deemed particularly desirable to have a seemingly more stable public sector job because, for example, at the time of my latest field research PA salaries had been temporarily cut by fifty percent (World Bank 2019a). Rather, the prospect of being a trader was attractive as it gave them a sense of ownership of their fate and a chance to be self-made (Field notes, April 2019). This meant no longer relying on either Israel nor the PA to whom they regularly felt both disdain and sense of being a forgotten and neglected group of Palestinians.

Becoming a trader also did not appear intimidating as though there is an acknowledged art to commerce many felt confident to enter the sector without experience, often believing that it was something that they could learn on the job. Others, as mentioned earlier, had been exposed to trade from a young age by their parents or grandparents. Many felt that being able to trade was in the blood of a Hebronite (Field notes, June 2018). Indeed, having seen for themselves, but also routinely hearing -even if just anecdotally- of Hebronites who became wealthy from trading in Chinese goods many were not just convinced that it was their only avenue for economic survival, but that it could potentially be very lucrative (Ibid.).

I routinely heard stories -often not confirmed- of Hebronites who started by selling their goods on the street and before long had opened multiple shops and earned great wealth (Ibid.). For the Table Traders such a pursuit did not appear out of reach as access to generally low quality and affordable Chinese goods, often requiring little more than a few hundred Shekels in personal savings, was all that was necessary to start a business. A phenomenon that has since the 1990s

⁶⁷ This is reflective of the low purchasing power of Palestinians. For latest figures see World Bank (2019b).

similarly been integral to the rise of peddler trade communities elsewhere in the world (e.g., Alba Vega 2012).

Indeed, how they source their goods provides interesting insights into the overlapping worlds of GFA and GFB, or formal and informal mechanisms in the ways business can be conducted. For example, in regards to financing, the proliferation of payment in 'cheques' since the mid-late 2000s (discussed in *Chapter Five*) facilitated many Table Traders to source more goods (Field notes, May 2019). While informal avenues to raise initial funds are also available. This includes strategies for those who are unable or prefer not to use cheques or to take loans from an official bank, but prefer to utilise a local and informal method of community financing called 'jamiyya'.

This form of "personal banking with friends" involves contributing an agreed amount into a combined pot each month that will then be distributed to one group member each month (Yasser Dweik, June 2018). The value of the jamiyya varies though it is often for a comparatively small group of trusted friends. In general, jamiyya is associated with, for example, support with helping to pay for a wedding or to purchase high value goods that a Palestinian would need to save for. For some smaller scale traders, it is also access to finance to purchase a small quantity of goods. One Table Trader in the Old City I interviewed is part of a jamiyya with fifteen other traders, worth approximately 15,000 NIS (Trader, June 2018).

But, in many cases, wholesalers who know them will not even require an upfront payment which means there is even less financial investment. The Table Traders will generally go to a wholesaler -or even a retailer- and simply buy as little as one or two boxes of a product. Once they have sold the goods they will return and replenish them. Often, they will buy an item that a fellow trader is looking to clear from his stock as these goods are sold at heavily discounted rates because the suppliers needs to clear room for the arrival of new merchandise (Field notes, Sept. 2017). This means that Table Traders are often selling out of season products (Field notes, June 2018). Alternatively, they will also try to purchase defected goods that another trader is unwilling to sell to their own customers - often items of clothing (Ibid.). Such practices are common place worldwide when

exploring the distribution networks that overlap peddler trade communities and more formal merchants that are their predominant suppliers (Alba Vega 2012, p.206; see also Neuwirth 2011). The range of methods deployed to source goods is important to note because for many of the smallest Table Traders, even the slightest mark up of a couple of Shekels can be an important source of income that may contribute towards their economic survival:

I work every day except Friday. If I don't work for two days this is a big problem for me. (Trader, May 2019).

There is almost no way that these traders can afford to establish a formal shop in Hebron, either as a registered business on Old Shallalah Street least of all in the New City, so stocked with their small collection of low quality goods they set up a table on Old Shallalah Street as the most viable site to conduct business - both practically and financially. Some may also have attempted to sell goods on the street further afield beyond the Bab Al-Zawiya roundabout, but in those areas they risk the attention of the PA as they are formerly in H1. Specifically, in H1 it is common to see members of the PA police and groups of black polo shirted public security guards usher along street vendors that pack out the pavement or take up road space. Occasionally, they will confiscate a vendor's goods in the back of a truck as a gesture to the keeping the order of the area (Field notes, June 2018).

Instead, as mentioned earlier, without formal registration and accountability to the PA they have almost no entry and limited operational costs on Old Al-Shallalah Street. For example, they rarely have to consider the storage of their goods as they can normally be carted away or for a small price, or as a favour, be held overnight in the shop of a more formal trader in the nearby area (Ibid.). Indeed, the economic gain available from being a Table Trader can be respectable considering the type of goods that are being traded. In the absence of a range of costs that a formal trader would otherwise have to face -such as rent and utilities- these merchants are able to charge lower prices than in other parts of the city while also making larger profit margins – poorer villagers from the outskirts of Hebron are common customers. Without declaring any of their sales they are also able to maximise their earnings.

Such benefits are regularly a source of aggravation for those on the street with formal shops as they are required to conduct business more officially with higher overheads (Field notes, June 2018). As such, even though Old Al-Shallalah Street has less foot flow than other commercial centres in Hebron and the type of customers it draws are generally from a lower income, it nevertheless provides a valuable site – and for some an entry point- to pursue trade as a form of economic subsistence when there are few, if any, viable alternatives.

And so, having earlier introduced some of Hebron's most prosperous traders who commonly started their path to wealth in the Old City, nowadays, scarcely a hundred metres into the Old City it is possible to identify a set of economic actors that also depend heavily on Chinese goods, but are far removed from the 'early pioneers'. In addition to the vast divergences in their respective wealth from trade, it is particularly obvious from the perspective of their relations with Israel, as not only are they distant from the types of 'privileges' rewarded to more elite Palestinian merchants (e.g. the BMC), but in many cases their basic socio-economic possibility is directly stifled by Israel.

This does not just include the repercussions of decades of de-development that has left them with few employment opportunities in the oPt, but also, for example, the challenges that many face in receiving permits to find work in Israel, or elsewhere. In response, these Palestinians, in particular young men, resort to such (il) licit commerce as a segment of society that Israel's colonial practices seek not to elevate but is willing to give a space "to breathe" for often basic economic gain. This then requires them to adopt a range of techniques to allow them to access the low cost goods they sell, often dependent on navigating both formal and informal networks of sourcing and finance, often with traders that operate above them in the hierarchy of Palestinian GFB.

But importantly, the case of the Old Al-Shallalah Street market shows how the pursuit of such (il) licit trade is primarily made possible by the de-facto deterritorialised status that the PA has allowed to develop along the formerly H1 parts of the street. Arguably, this is not so significant from the perspective of, for example, lost government tax revenues, as the level of commerce on Old Al-Shallalah Street in the context of Hebron's broader trade sector is likely marginal

– even if there are no verifiable figures. What is significant is that such deterritorialisation is clearly influenced by the presence of the Israeli military and Israeli settlers in nearby H2.

Though this -for now at least- benefits certain traders, to other merchants it is also a concerning sign of the PA's acquiescence to Israeli control and Israeli encroachment beyond H2 – an act that is routinely witnessed in other disputed parts of the Old City (Field notes, June 2018). This sentiment drives a further rationale for many traders who seek to conduct business in the Old City, one that is not driven purely by economic motives. Rather, being a trader is also about standing one's ground as a Palestinian against Israeli occupation and its settler colonial goals of territorial expansion. This is most noticeably witnessed in the heart of H2, where economic survival is paralleled by the longstanding Palestinian ideology of "Existence is Resistance".



Figure 13 "Existence is Resistance" graffitied next to a Table Trader's stand

SECTION FOUR: THE OLD CITY - “YOU CANNOT CALL ME A TRADER”

As I walked away from the bustling Old Shallalah Street market towards the heart of the Old City and into Israeli controlled H2, I was called down a side alley by a vendor named Ahmed. Ahmed’s aged and worn down features disguise that he is still only in his late-thirties, but having spent his whole life both residing and selling goods in the Old City he and his family have experienced the full force of Israeli policy over Hebron. This includes over two decades selling goods, previously out of his father’s shop but now needing to hang his products on make shift pegs or on the welded closed door frames of what were once popular and thriving businesses -including his fathers:

I’ve been beaten by the Israeli army many times. I’ve been arrested four times. But I’m not afraid. (Ahmed, June 2018).

Aside the alley where Ahmed sells a small collection of locally produced goods, such as scarves and accessories, he points out the street of the old Gold Market that was once a central feature of the Hebron market place – it is now strewn with garbage and barbed wire. A similar fate for three nearby book stores that are also closed under Israeli military order – the books are still inside. As Ahmed’s side alley stand is both beyond the Old-Shallalah Street market and far from the Ibrahimi Mosque where Palestinians and tourists head towards he sees many potential consumers pass by, but rarely will they stop to purchase from him. Often he will go weeks without selling a single item.



Figure 14 Beginning of the caged canopy near the H1-H2 divide

And so, with limited business prospects it would appear unjustified for Ahmed to continue being a vendor. But, making money from trade is not Ahmed's only interest. His whole life has been spent witnessing the seemingly unrelenting Israeli policy to both control and colonise the Old City. A policy that goes beyond the measures designed to mitigate Palestinian traders from opening and managing their shops; for Ahmed it has also meant incursions on his property by the Israeli military or the illegal Israeli settlers that live above him – which include entering his home and breaking his belongings in acts that are clearly designed to intimidate him and his family.

The logic behind such Israeli policy is clear to Ahmed and the other traders that will be discussed in this section; it is designed to encourage them to leave the area to facilitate Israel's settler colonial goal of bringing the Old City into full Israeli control; Reynold identifies these informal and informal policies as measures to promote 'forcible transfer' in Hebron (2017). In response, Ahmed has maintained a clear position in defiance and one that is scarcely informed by any economic rationale:



Figure 15 Street of the old gold market

I will stay here until I die. I will only leave here one day. The day they take me to the tomb! (Ahmed, June 2018).

Ahmed provides an insight into the Palestinian ideology of 'Sumud' – often translated as 'steadfastness' or 'perseverance'.

4.1. SUMUD: “TO GET IN THE WAY ALL THE NATIVE HAS TO DO IS STAY AT HOME”

The notion of ‘Sumud’ primarily emerged in the context of Israel’s full occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 as Palestinians (in both the oPt and Israel) engaged in heightened political consciousness and collective national identity in their anti-colonial struggle (Dana and Jarbawi 2017, p.19). This form of resistance, thereafter, encapsulated a range of popular protests that were particularly characteristic of the First Intifada (1987-1994). When otherwise confronted by the options of “exile or submissive capitulation” or “blind, consuming hate”, Sumud is considered the ‘third way’ to resist under Israeli occupation as an act of invariable hardship and resilience (Shehadeh 1984, p.38).⁶⁸

Sumud is grounded heavily in the notion of Palestinian indigenous connection to the land and the importance of maintaining a physical presence so as to avoid being dispossessed or displaced (Clarno 2017, p.123). Such practices should, therefore, not be confused with what scholars such as Campbell (2007) refer to as ‘slantwise’, that is behaviours of unintended resistance as individuals pursue their day to day goals of, for example, economic survival. Rather, here we should draw parallels to the ‘everyday forms of resistance’ as presented by Scott’s study of peasant politics (1985). That is, practices that can scarcely be defined as “outright collective defiance” that are clear and coordinated acts against an oppressive authority, but are nevertheless, integral “weapons of the weak” that are the most significant, and potentially most impactful in the long term (Ibid., xvi). This ties to a broader consideration of settler colonial dynamics, that is, if, as Veracini highlights the goal of the settler project is for the indigenous population to “go away”, then persistence and survival are the “weapons” of the colonised (2011, p.3). Or as Wolfe aptly stated, “to get in the way all the native has to do is stay at home” (Wolfe 1999, p.1).

⁶⁸ For a study on the significance of ‘resilience’ to ‘Sumud’ see Marie et al. (2018). For a more general debate about the term ‘resistance’, and particularly its application to ‘everyday resistance’ see Iniguez de Heredia (2017, p.50-75).

Sumud has been adopted in various forms throughout the Palestinian struggle in the oPt, but broadly, there are two types of 'Sumud'. The first is 'static Sumud' and the second is 'resistance Sumud'. The former constitutes the more passive act of remaining present on one's land as a 'Samed' (an individual that adopts Sumud), and the latter is an active strategy of seeking alternative methods to de-link from Palestinian dependency on Israeli while challenging its ongoing settler colonial project – often through the establishment of Palestinian institutions (Dana 2014b, p.4).

In recent years, with the increased application of the colonial framework to the case of Palestine, the notion of 'Sumud' has also been proposed to inform a policy of 'development as resistance' to challenge what have been more problematic forms of economic development, such as neoliberalism (Farsakh 2016, p.66-7). Instead, for example, emphasising the significance of local production and diminished ties with the Israeli economy. Indeed, the importance of tying economic activity to broader Palestinian self-determination and resistance to Israeli colonialism was aptly stated many years ago by notable Palestinian economist Abed whom contended that "every economic act is to be judged as to whether it reinforces the occupation or weakens it, whether or not it promotes dependency or self-reliance" (1988 p.9). Herein lies the space where Palestinians like Ahmed operate as a 'Samed', as cases of 'static Sumud', where their everyday functions as traders is intricately interwoven with a broader everyday purpose of resilience and resistance against Israel's ongoing colonial practices.

Such a defiant perspective has often been integral to attempts by the Palestinian authorities -specifically local organisations such as the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC)- to revive the Old City, and specifically its trade economy. Indeed, this comparatively small community of traders who are willing to remain steadfast in the face of incessant challenges in the deterritorialised space of H2 present a further dimension to Palestinian GFB. As unlike the more conventional paradigm of GFB trade centred on the pursuit of commercial gain and not political defiance (Ribeiro 2009), this group of traders challenges this perspective and instead is constituted of merchants who also prioritise Palestinian 'survival', 'steadfastness', or 'Sumud' through their physical presence in the market.

It is important to note that the Old City market does not only compose of such

minded traders, in fact they are likely a minority amongst a small, but growing, number of merchants that are increasingly looking to the unique conditions of the Old City as a low cost (financially) entry point to the trade economy. Nevertheless, as the previous section was dedicated to principally economically motivated traders, this final part of the chapter will focus on the merchants who are also driven by 'Sumud'.

I will, as with the other sections, draw heavily upon the individual experiences of these traders. This will include their particular histories that inform their positions, and also commentary on the type of trade in which they engage. By highlighting its generally low value it further demonstrates their lesser interest in immediate commercial gain. To begin though, it is worth considering a key reason why these traders are able to persist in the Old City. Specifically, the unparalleled low operating costs -again, I stress financial- that enable existing traders to remain virtually cost free. This includes policies designed to aid their earning potential but also, and very importantly, the low levels of rent.

4.2. OPERATING IN H2

In response to a decision by former PA President Yasser Arafat to mitigate the challenges of residing under Israeli control in H2 in the wake of the Second Intifada, Hebronites in the Old City receive specific concessions. In the case of traders, they do not need to declare their transactions as they are not required to pay any form of tax related to their business, and utilities -specifically electricity- are subsidised to the extent that any cost is negligible (Field notes, May 2018). At one point, Old City traders were also, supposedly, offered approximately \$200 a month to keep their shops open – though by all accounts, rarely was this paid (Field notes, June 2018).

Such cost savings scarcely outweigh the limited business opportunities, but nevertheless, do allow for traders to keep whatever they earn and, if required, also enables them to undercut the price of goods found elsewhere in the Hebron market. This is important because Old City traders require much higher profit margins in the absence of customers. For example, an Old City trader might need to make over 30-40% on the sale of an item whereas 10% would be sufficient in

the new city as traders there generally sell in larger volumes (Ibid.). Though, as Old City traders predominantly target tourists, it is also possible to sell more costly locally made products that are more profitable than, for example, cheap Chinese imports. Indeed, for many traders their propensity to favour local products over those that are imported is another facet of their 'Sumud', specifically one that ties to the increasing call for 'resistance as development' or 'economic resistance', that includes the promotion of domestic goods and production (Dana 2014b).

Nevertheless, though such policies and conditions are somewhat incentivising, one of the principle differentiators with other sites in Hebron is the cost saving from rent. As mentioned in *Section Two*, over recent decades -but especially following the Second Intifada- land and rental prices in Hebron have skyrocketed. Yet, in the heart of the Old City - that was once the most prime commercial real estate in Hebron- the rental economy has scarcely changed in recent decades; a reflection of the limited number of new businesses and the unfeasibility of increasing rents at a site with such poor economic conditions. This is evident from the fact that the vast majority of Old City traders I interviewed still paid what is termed 'Old Rent' - a rental price that was agreed from as early as when Palestine was under Jordanian rule.⁶⁹ In Palestine, such rent -as with 'new rent'- cannot be changed over the course of the rental period. This means that traders in the Old City might still be paying as little as 23 JD a year for their shop based on an agreement often established by their fathers or even grandfathers.⁷⁰

I pay old rent... my dad paid 23 dinar a year, about 115 NIS! When they came to ask for rent he would tell them: "I don't want to see you once a year - I want to see you in ten years". This is what I did. In 2013 they came here and I asked to pay 10 years upfront. I pay the same amount, 23 dinar. It helps us a lot because rent is so low. (Jamal, June 2018).

As much costlier 'new rent' is indicative of a new rental contract, the absence of

⁶⁹ This is based on a 1953 Jordanian Law. This law continues to have far reaching impact on the rental economy in Palestine. For a commentary on how it affects the residential property market see Toufic (2016).

⁷⁰ Note that amongst those that selected 'new rent' it meant that they had recently agreed a rental contract, but importantly, the cost was still very low and comparable to the cost of 'old rent' paid by other Old City traders.

such rents also shows that ownership of shops has scarcely passed hands in the Old City. It is important to note that for many Old City traders the sentimental value of keeping their shop limits the chance of them ending their rental contract, and instead they simply keep their shop locked up until the day that business might hopefully return. On occasion, they might open their stores or sub-rent it temporarily when business in the Old City increases, such as during Ramadan (Field notes, June 2018). But equally, the lack of new demand for shop space is indicative of how traders with a serious ambition of making a credible profit -in the short term at least- would unlikely locate their business in the Old City and so contributes towards keeping rents low.

Furthermore, Old City shops are predominantly a small 'hole in the wall' type space requiring limited decorations and upkeep, indeed the HRC often provides such maintenance for free.⁷¹ The running cost of the shops is also low as in general they are manned by just one trader, if support is required it is generally a non-waged family member. The younger -almost always male- traders in the Old City are often the children of the former shopkeepers; not one shop I visited hired more than a handful of workers. And so, in comparison with, for example, the new city, the operating costs are incomparable. But also, the minimal overheads enable these traders to invest in trade at a much lower level which means they, for example, also have less risk of losing profit from stockpiling unsold goods.

For example, when 55 year old Hisham was asked by his father to re-open their family store in 2016 to support of HRC efforts to revitalise the Old City he was told to fill it with "whatever", such as a few keffiyehs and some trinkets. Many of the goods that Hisham initially sold are still on display today. It was only over a year later that he started sourcing a broader range of products that might appeal to a wider range of customers. As both his father and brother are also traders elsewhere in the city that is where he gets his supply, either for free or at a low price. Hisham stressed that to either begin or maintain a trade business in the Old City requires minimal capital investment. For him, it was only a few hundred NIS, while for others 1000 NIS would be sufficient. This is particularly possible with the abundance of wholesalers in the city whereby a trader can easily sell and

⁷¹ For example, installing new front doors or upgrading electrical supplies.

replenish in small quantities thereby lowering his cost – especially goods from China (Field notes, June 2018). During my various interviews with Old City traders who sourced Chinese goods from a local supplier, many claimed that -as with Hisham- their first investment was no more than a few hundred dollars' worth of goods.

A further reason why many traders only store a low quantity and value of goods is because in the absence of proper policing for the protection of Hebronites in H2 -by neither the PA nor the Israeli military- it is unsafe to leave valuable goods in one's shop. A lesson learnt by one of Hisham's neighbours who attempted to start selling expensive bracelets, but overnight his shop was broken into and his NIS 30,000 of stock was stolen. But for Hisham it was not a matter of concern because, as he said:

If they break in I don't say I don't give a damn. But I don't feel very bad. I can start from the beginning because I didn't lose a lot of things. (Hisham, June 2018).

And so, with limited operating costs and the opportunity to maximise profits it would appear that remaining a trader in the Old City could be economically motivating. But, though far from the travesties of the heightened periods of instability -such as the Second Intifada- nowadays, often he might only make about 50-150 NIS from about two to three customers. On occasion, he might go days without selling anything.

The often unreliable commercial potential in the area, therefore, forces many Old City traders to seek additional employment elsewhere. For Hisham, the insufficient levels of income generated today means that he has to fall back on a second job to support his family. This is particularly so in the winter months when by mid-afternoon the Old City might be completely desolate. So Hisham, after twenty years of managing his shop for four to five hours each day it means going to a local factory to work for another six and a half hours as a forklift driver. Others traders take their goods and try to sell them elsewhere in the evening while one at least moonlights as a security guard for a local school (Field notes, June 2018). Unsurprisingly, these traders are often not considered genuine merchants,

especially by those in Hebron who have generated great wealth from globalised trade. Indeed, from even the Bab Al-Zawiya roundabout many more prosperous traders in the new city consider commerce in this area as not really constituting proper trade (Field notes, June 2018). Though interestingly, this is not necessarily something that the Old City traders referred to in this section would contest. As one poignantly stated while showing me his small collection of goods:

You cannot call me a trader! (Trader, June 2018).

If economic motives are not the sole priority then why else would these traders remain in the Old City? To answer this it requires a further exploration of who these traders are as it provides a necessary context to their motives and the decisions they make that identify them as unique cases of GFB actors. Specifically, a choice to remain an Old City trader is also an act of 'Sumud'. A useful introduction to such traders was Hisham's cousin Jamal – considered as one of the longest standing traders in the Old City.

4.3. “YOU CAN CALL THIS A KIND OF RESISTANCE”

At about 8am each morning Jamal carefully sets up his shop on the cobbled and narrow street that leads to the checkpoint that grants access to the Ibrahimi Mosque. The caged canopy that lines the alley serves as a useful structure to hang the array of scarves and clothing he sells. Each day Jamal remembers to hang a scarf covered in egg yolk to show passers-by -particularly foreign tourists- the reality of living below Israeli settlers whom regularly throw waste down onto the Palestinian shops below. With his shop prepared Jamal awaits the business of the day and a chance to converse with those who will pass by. Often it is fellow traders in the area that he has known for generations. But as a competent English speaker, with a slight Mancunian accent that he picked up in his three years studying in the UK, Jamal is also regularly able to attract the attention of foreign visitors - who are keen to hear his story of the Old City.

I am the oldest in the area and settlements are on top of me so guides like me to talk. (Jamal, June 2018).

As with every long time Hebronite trader, Jamal stressed the need to “put in your mind the old days...it used to be busy, so active”(Ibid.). For Jamal this dates back to around sixty six years ago when his father, aged just fourteen, opened the shop; as a tribal wise man and prominent member of the Hebronite community he had at the age of eighty eight recently passed away. His father had primarily sold materials and threads to local Palestinians -often nearby villagers and Bedouins- who would use them to make household items like pillowcases and dresses. Today, Jamal also sells local hand made products such as women’s garments and blankets.

Jamal was brought into the business as a child when he would go to the local suppliers to collect the materials and then help his father cut them up for each customer. If not to help his father he would go to pick something up for his mother or simply spend time there after school or during school vacations. This meant that from the age of seven the world of the Old City had been a constant presence in his life as it was the centre of life in Hebron. Though Jamal has seven siblings he was the one who spent the most time at the shop. And so, after his father retired it was natural that he at around twenty five should inherit it. This mirrored the situation of many traders across Hebron but particularly in the Old City where shopkeepers were continuing the family business (Field notes, June 2018). Now at aged fifty seven, Jamal has spent fifty years in the Old City. This means he has fond memories of “the good old days” as well as an acute awareness of “the bad” from around the First Intifada onwards (Ibid.).



Figure 16 Jamal in front of his shop

As a result, Jamal has witnessed first-hand Israeli policy in the Old City since the earliest periods of occupation. This has informed him of what is a clear goal to eradicate Palestinian presence in a city that is coveted by radical Israeli settlers and their political and military backers. Jamal has suffered the extended curfews during the two Intifada's that almost wiped out his business, and he knows many of the former traders that are no longer able to open their shops. But importantly, Jamal has seen how Israeli settlers and the military have appropriated Palestinian property in the Old City, be it under the guise of 'security' measures or illegal settlers forcing their way into Palestinian homes – both one's abandoned and still occupied (Ibid.). The steady demise of Palestinian control and the deterioration of conditions in the Old City and its neighbouring H2 areas has shown to Jamal that Israeli policy is a long game and that "they [the Israeli's] are patient":

You see what happened at the mosque- they took the area. And then slowly they took other places. So who knows for the future? Maybe this area will be gone next time you are here. (Jamal, June 2018).

And so, Jamal is acutely aware that his presence, as well as that of his fellow traders, is an impediment to the further annexation of the Old City under Israeli control. That if he were to abandon his shop there is the very real potential that it could be lost forever. This provides Jamal with significant impetus to remain a trader even in the absence of economic opportunities found elsewhere in Hebron. A sentiment shared by numerous other traders, including Mohamad, whom I will introduce shortly, who said the following:

If I don't stay here they will take my shop or close my shop! if no one is there maybe Israeli's will take it like the homes. (Mohamad, May 2019).

Indeed, Jamal is one of the few Old City traders that does not even need commercial gain from his shop. As a long term Old City merchant Jamal has already generated sufficient wealth from trade over the decades. This has afforded him the opportunity to educate all of his children who now have stable work in other fields. For him, his principal goal of supporting his family has been achieved - anything now is just extra. This means that it is sadly unlikely that his shop will be passed down a further generation, but importantly, he can keep it

open principally out of choice and not for economic necessity. At times he might only make a few dozen NIS, that is “only enough for a pack of cigarettes” (Jamal, June 2018), so there is often scarcely a reason to open. But he, like many other more elderly traders, does it to keep himself busy as it is an opportunity to leave his home and spend time with old friends, but also, and importantly, because the Old City is where he -and his fellow traders- belongs and he will not allow the Israeli occupation to change that:

I came down here when I was young. I belong to here. This is in my mind. In my blood. In my heart. In my soul. I tell tourists that we are determined to stay, we will not give up as long as we will live. (Ibid.).

This sense of belonging and resistance to further Israeli control -even without commercial gain- is a common theme for such minded traders, as evidenced by another Old City merchant Mohamad.

By aged sixteen Mohamad was handed management of his shop by his father - his grandfather originally opened it in 1901. What is interesting about Mohamad is that though he makes little profit from his shop, it is not a true reflection of his families wealth. As is common in the Hebron trading community, his family members are also merchants. This includes his brother who is an active importer -regularly visiting China to source products- who manages two other shops outside the Old City. Yet, whenever Mohamad has been presented with the opportunity to leave the Old City he has adamantly refused to do so. Mohamad fully recognises that there is no economic sense to his decision and fully understands why his brother “thinks I’m crazy because I work here” and others “they say I am a loser here” (Mohamad, May 2018).

This is particularly apparent as he has seen his brother, and many former Old City traders, make notable incomes from establishing businesses elsewhere, especially in the new city. Indeed, many older Old City traders are more reliant on the incomes generated by their children who run other shops in the city (Field notes, July 2018). Mohamad openly identifies that to have any prospects a trader should “go up” (i.e. to the New City) where there is potential for “development” due to the higher consumer demands (May 2018). But again, though by watching

Mohamad seemingly scrape by each day it would appear that economic survival is his priority, it is not a full reflection of his motivation as a trader. Like Jamal, he has spent most of his life in the Old City and now aged almost sixty his focus also revolves around maintaining his dignity as a Palestinian whose life will not be dictated by the Israeli occupation, and to ensure that, to his limited capacity, that the Old City remains an omnipresent site of Palestinian 'Sumud':

I want to open this [shop] because I love my city. If I don't love my city I can go up (to the New City). It's bad condition but I love still my city. If I go they take my shop, maybe the settlers, but because I love my city I stay here. (Ibid.)

The Old City traders therefore present a very particular type of trader in an especially unique site of GFB activity. Again, I stress that the Old City does not solely constitute merchants that are motivated in this way, but nevertheless, these traders were worthy of specific attention as they show how in Palestine, and specifically Hebron, what motivates trade does not always correlate to more conventional paradigms of individual's pursuing commercial gain. But rather, that commerce can be intricately tied to Israeli settler colonialism. Not only in the sense that trade must function within the framework offered by formal and informal Israeli policy, but that trade is undertaken as an act of resistance against Israel's colonial practices. In this case, traders are proponents of a Palestinian ideology of 'static Sumud' whereby their physical presence in the Old City is deemed as an integral in mitigating and challenging further deterritorialisation of the Old City to even more heightened control and potential annexation by Israel.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION

Throughout my research it has been scarcely possible to mention China-Palestine trade without being signposted to the City of Hebron. As the largest city in the West Bank and the centre of Palestinian trade and industry, Hebron, and specifically its merchant community, have for decades played a preeminent role in bridging China-Palestine commerce. Unsurprisingly, the rate of Chinese imports to Hebron vastly supersedes that to other parts of the West Bank. As such, there is a common anecdotal expression heard throughout Palestine:

In China they think Hebron is a country, they don't know about Palestine.
(Field notes, Sept. 2017).

Simultaneously, Hebron is often considered a 'microcosm' of the occupation and a unique case of deterritorialisation due to its particular geographic divide following the 1997 Hebron Protocol. The city is formally split into two contrasting social, economic and political spaces. Specifically, H1 governed by the PA and H2 under the control of the Israeli military, with a third grey space on the H1-H2 borderland. The resultant deterritorialisation is directly related to the up to 850, predominantly radical, Jewish settlers and their military protectors that reside in the heart of this sacred city as part of a broader expansionist Zionist policy that Veracini would identify as 'transfer' by settlers (2010, p.49). As such, Hebron provides a preeminent example of China-Palestine trade under the conditions of a settler colonial informed occupation.

This chapter has shown that the experiences of the Hebron merchant community is not homogenous across the different sites of economic exchange, but that there is a spectrum of potential responses in the face of ongoing colonial practices, and in the absence of a collective Palestinian strategy of resistance. Specifically, I introduced three groups of traders in three different sites in Hebron and commented on the conditions that led to their engagement with the GFB economy, but particularly, their often exceptionally different economic and political trajectories thereafter. This included traders who are now more active in H1, the informal 'Table' economy in the borderland of H1 and H2, and finally the 'ghost town' of H2. In every case, both formal and informal Israeli policy is at the heart of defining the spaces and conditions under which GFB activity operates; in parallel highlighting the limited capacity of the PA to function in spaces where its governance is deterritorialised.

The varying examples of trade activity and their affiliated actors also showed the breadth of GFB behaviour in a settler colonial context, and how it compares to other studies of GFB worldwide. In some cases, particularly that of Old Al-Shallalah Street in the H1-H2 borderland, though the trading space emerged from Israel's particular colonial policy of de-development and deterritorialisation, the practices prevalent in this area are not, unlike, many other examples of informal

street vending found in urban centres elsewhere where traders are defined predominantly by their pursuit for commercial gain (e.g., Neuwirth 2011; Alba Vega 2012; Aguiar 2013). These traders are in line with Ribeiro's early identification of GFB actors as not being defiant towards GFA and its affiliated actors (2009), but are often dependent on interaction with the GFA economy while also adopting their own strategies to benefit from globalised Palestinian trade. Importantly, many simply consider themselves as a "forgotten" group of Palestinians -by both the PA and Israel- and play a limited role in either acquiescing to or resisting the occupation, as they instead focus on economic survival by adapting to their present reality in the absence of viable alternatives following decades of de-development.

Other Hebronite traders, however, challenge such GFB paradigms by drawing attention to the broader political structures in which merchants must navigate. In the case of the more prosperous 'early pioneer' traders, their heightened levels of interdependence with the Israeli private and public sector -exemplified by those in possession of a BMC card- can be considered as part of a wider colonial strategy of co-optation that helps to shape favourable Palestinian behaviour and mitigate resistance. As such, I contended that many of this group's practices invert the conventional designation of GFB as predominantly (il) licit, but are instead better considered as (il) legal in the eyes of much of Palestinian society. That is, formally legal yet socially deemed illicit as how they conduct business could be seen as appeasing to a policy of 'economic peace' – an approach much lauded by Israel and the international community, but has been, in fact, a façade for ongoing Israeli colonisation.

Alternatively, traders in the H2 area of the Old City do, of course, seek commercial gain, but are also motivated to remain traders as part of a broader act of non-violent political resistance against incessant efforts to further Israeli control and colonisation of the area that was once the social and economic heartbeat of Hebron. This requires their physical presence in the Old City as participants in a longstanding Palestinian act of 'Sumud' ('steadfastness') to counteract both the formal and informal policies that have, so far, contributed to the forced displacement of many of their fellow Hebronites. Importantly, Sumud should not be conflated with practices that can be deemed as political resistant,

but are not intended for this purpose, as regularly found in cases of tension between the worlds of GFB and GFA. Rather, in this case, we are speaking of a purposeful everyday form of resistance that is considered one of the few remaining weapons of the colonised. To be a trader can, thus, be a matter of political survival as well as economic, in particular in the face of a broader settler colonial informed logic of elimination.

The complexities of Palestinian GFB in the heart of the West Bank's principal economic centre naturally raises questions as to how such trade manifests in other parts of the oPt. Specifically, this chapter showed the impact of Israeli imposed 'borders' that have contributed towards the deterritorialisation of PA governance. Therefore, how might GFB exist in the supposed border space between the West Bank and Israel? Here I chose a unique, or 'extreme', case with the village of Barta'a that straddles the two territories in a contested site known as the 'Seam Zone': formerly under PA control but on the Israeli side of the Separation Barrier. Unsurprisingly, a very particular form of GFB activity manifests in Barta'a and, once again, Chinese goods lie at the heart of this trade.

CHAPTER SEVEN: “IF YOU DIVIDE PALESTINE INTO THREE SECTIONS: WEST BANK, GAZA, AND BARTA’A!” - GFB IN A DIVIDED VILLAGE

In 2005 Raed Amal Kabha went to the front gate of his house to welcome the most recent delegation that had come to visit and learn about the complex realities of the ‘border’ village Barta’a. As a long term resident, local businessman and a regular representative of Barta’a to outside visitors Raed had welcomed many groups, often government officials, students and NGOs. But on that day, the head of the group who sat by the entrance of his home was an unexpected figure, it was the Chinese Ambassador to Israel. The Ambassador was joined by thirty to forty colleagues mainly from the Chinese Embassy in Tel Aviv. They had made the trip to Barta’a as amongst the tragedies of the Second Intifada that had seen the demise of Palestinian international and domestic trade a beacon of hope flickered in China-Palestine trade statistics. The Ambassador had been alerted to a place named Barta’a where containers from China had continued to arrive seemingly unabated. Raed recalled that the group had planned to stay the night having assumed Barta’a was a thriving mecca of trade that would require some time to explore. But as Raed promptly informed them: “Barta’a is just a village”. (Field Notes, April 2018)

INTRODUCTION: THE ROAD TO BARTA’A

“We have to turn right here. Turn Right is Palestine, Straight ahead is Israel”: Ali points to the road sign along Israeli controlled Route 611 marking the turnoff of to Barta’a, Route 6115. As his brother Abed drives towards the junction they emphasise that for most Palestinians going a few more metres would entail breaking the law and, if caught, a Palestinian could at best be turned around and at worst be arrested and even have their permit revoked. Yet, there is no Israeli security or visible monitoring at the turn off; Palestinians are predominantly left to self-regulate so as not to cross the Green Line into Israel. Instead, our car enters Barta’a, formerly Area B under Palestinian administrative control though encased by lands designated as ‘closed military zones’ governed fully by the Israeli military.



Figure 17 Road sign to Barta'a

This comparative freedom of movement is because Ali and Abed, as with other Palestinians travelling to Barta'a, were vetted 3-4 kilometres earlier at one of the West Bank's most stringent checkpoints, Reihan. A 'crossing' that is made to suggest that Palestinians have passed into a new governing jurisdiction, while in reality they have not actually left the Palestinian territories, nor entered Israel, but rather the 'Seam Zone': approximately 138,000 dunams of land that is formerly on the Palestinian side of the Green Line, but on the other side of the Israeli imposed Separation Wall (Hareuveni et al. 2012). Traders like Abed and Ali know the checkpoint well, having crossed it regularly since its construction over fifteen years ago.

As we continue to drive through the outskirts of the village stacks of disfigured cars line the road, almost all with Israeli licence plates. At one time they were frequently stolen from Israel as they could simply be taken into Barta'a without passing any formal security checkpoints, but now they are primarily vehicles that no longer meet Israeli road safety standards.⁷² They are sold to repair shops where they will be dissected for parts that can be recycled or sent to the scrap yard for their metal. Often, without much -if any- repair the cars will have a second life in Barta'a as a 'Mashtub', driven around without a licence plate mainly to ferry boxes of goods between shops and nearby warehouses. This is all possible because there are essentially no road safety standards for vehicles to adhere to in Barta'a just as the roads are not formerly governed by the Palestinian Ministry

⁷² For literature and media commentary related to the smuggling of Israeli vehicles into the oPt see: Katz et al. 2006; Urquhart 2006; Natsheh and Parizot 2015; Ezzedine 2017.

of Transport.⁷³ As such, the Mashtub gives a first taste of the impact of deterritorialised PA governance.



Figure 18 Mashtub vehicle crossing the Wadi

Beyond the first roundabout and petrol station -where Israeli drivers can fill their tanks with 6.28 NIS a litre petrol, compared with 7.14 NIS a litre at an Israeli petrol station only a few kilometres away-⁷⁴ the many shops begin to dominate the roadside selling a variety of goods that include: household commodities, clothing, shoes, carpets, food and drink, and car accessories. Of the non-food and beverage items, just as in the West Bank, the majority are ‘Made in China’.

We soon pass ‘Hamarshe’, the family store run by Abed, Ali and their eldest brother Mohammed. A group of brothers without a notable family history in trade, but from the late 1980s-early 1990s, took over their father’s small business and explored the fruits of globalisation to become some of the West Bank’s more notable merchants. Since 2005, Abed has travelled to China at least five times a year to source goods for his various family businesses while also acting as a middleman for hundreds of other Palestinians that depend both on Chinese products, but also Abed’s acumen for international trade.

⁷³ Mashtubs are normally easily to identify because of the absence of a license plate and their all-around state of disrepair. Many residents of Barta’a that own a licensed vehicle will also have a Mashtub for use inside Barta’a because if they have an accident with a Mashtub in their regular car it would be impossible to seek any compensation.

⁷⁴ Unleaded fuel. Prices as of spring 2018.

Before starting the business of the day Abed first drives to the end of the approximately 700 metre high street and turns left, dropping down into the Wadi, before ascending again and looping around the roundabout by the Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque. The complexity of Barta'a has now taken another crucial turn. For a Palestinian without the appropriate permit he has just broken the law as we are no longer in Palestine, but entered Israel about 30m earlier when we crossed the Green Line in the Wadi. Similar to the 6115 junction, there was no security wall or Israeli official to regulate the movement. An inconspicuous rock with the words 'Partitioned Barta'a' and a brief commentary on the history of the village's division is the only indicator. A Palestinian can have one foot on each side of the Green Line or continue to walk into Israel without being challenged. This near invisible 'border' separates Barta'a Palestine from Barta'a Israel. Or East Barta'a and West Barta'a, respectively. From now on, unless stated otherwise, when referring to Barta'a I am only referring to East Barta'a, the Palestinian side.



Figure 19 Rock with description of the division of Barta'a

It is by the Wadi where the three brothers from the West Bank village of Yabad opened their first shop in Barta'a in 1999. The first store sold, as they still do today at their new site, household commodities, mainly kitchenware. This was, and remains, a lucrative sector in Barta'a as they predominantly target Palestinian Citizens of Israel and specifically newlyweds. This is because in Muslim tradition the parents of the bride often fund the equipping of the new home and so Palestinian families from the nearby towns and villages in Israel such as Kafr-

Qara or Umm al-Fahm come to Hamarshe to source all the necessary household goods in one purchase. Such customers might, therefore, spend thousands of NIS in one purchase. In the earlier years, as the brothers were originally unable to meet all the demands of the shoppers, they actively encouraged other West Bank traders to move to the village. They hoped to make Barta'a a type of one-stop-shop for Israeli customers and so soon after new traders arrived to sell, for example, textiles and garments.

As some of Barta'a's earliest merchants they have, therefore, seen the growth of the village from its early inception as a hub of GFB activity in the late 1990s, and are a preeminent example of the opportunities that Barta'a presents to West Bank traders, especially for those that came in the late 1990s-early 2000s. As a result, they are now among some of the villages most successful and respected traders, and are all BMC holders. Their extensive experience in Barta'a means that they have been able to observe the many new traders who have since arrived in the village: this includes those in the early 2000s who wanted to set up a business in Barta'a but were forced to circumvent the newly built Separation Wall via illegal transit through Israel, to the explosion of retailers who have contributed towards the recent erosion of lucrative returns from doing business in the village. It is the insights of the Hamarshe brothers, that will heavily inform the analysis of this chapter.

BARTA'A MARKET VILLAGE

As a small village with a resident population of around 5,000 people Barta'a would likely be a nondescript locale of minimal significance to Palestinian GFB if it were anywhere else in the West Bank (PCBS Data).⁷⁵ Yet, it is estimated that on a busy day up to twenty thousand people might be found in Barta'a (Raed Kabha, April 2018). This includes the over seven thousand West Bank traders and their staff that operate the 1700 retail and wholesale outlets trading in mainly low end consumer goods (Ghassan Kabha, Mayor of Barta'a, July 2018). In 2012 it was estimated that 20,000 cars made their way to the market every day from Israel (Heruti-Sover 2012).

⁷⁵ 5,190, data for 2016.

There are no formal statistics available on the scale of commerce in Barta'a but some predict that it accounts for up to a third of the trade in the Jenin Governate (Jenin Customs Department, June 2018). The Palestinian authorities in the West Bank deem any attempt to calculate the value of goods sold in Barta'a an empty pursuit due to the unprecedented and largely uncontrollable levels of undervaluation and under declaration; based on the insights of Barta'a traders it is unquestionably in -at least- the millions of dollars (Field notes, May 2018):

Barta'a, this area is crazy... business in this area is like fire. All Chinese goods. (Field notes, Sept. 2017).

Barta'a is one of the most unique, and arguably, at times, most profitable sites of Palestinian GFB due to the manifold complexities of doing business in this village. This is due to the lucrative conditions for commercial gain derived from Barta'a's particular 'borderland' geographical location and its heightened status of deterritorialisation. But, though border spaces are regular sites of GFB activity as they generally inhabit a grey zone characterised by the inconsistent enforcement of governance (Schendel 2005), the case of Barta'a is particularly complex as under Israeli settler colonialism it is shaped by multiple visible and invisible, formal and informal economic, societal and political 'borders' that are pre-eminently dictated and governed by the State of Israel, but also influenced by the local Barta'a community, specifically the Kabha tribe.

As traders, therefore, weave in and out of variant 'regulatory authorities' it provides the foundation for the proliferation of (il) licit practices characteristic of GFB (Schendel and Abraham 2005). This has manifested in the rise of what is often termed locally as a 'free zone' or 'black market' economy in Barta'a with Chinese goods as the principle products being exchanged; primarily between West Bank Palestinians and Palestinian Citizens of Israel, but also other Israeli sub groups seeking major cost savings. This economy has in turn also contributed towards a range of broader socio-economic and political phenomenon, for example, the village becoming a key transit point for Palestinian labourers, or the proliferation of a lucrative land renting economy for local Barta'a villagers who depend almost exclusively on West Bank traders and workers:

People are not coming here for the sake of the weather or hospitality...it is the cheap goods. (Raed Kabha, April 2018).

With such an array of vested interests in maintaining the opportunities that Barta'a presents it invariably creates a dilemma as to how such a status quo can be maintained without Palestinians in Barta'a ultimately acquiescing to Israeli occupation policy. This is because Barta'a's success is fundamentally a by-product of Israel's settler colonial logic of territorial expansion and annexation enacted through the Separation Wall, and the affiliated deterritorialisation of the affected Palestinian territories. As such, traders are caught in a quandary where political conflict is conducive to their commercial profit (e.g., Nordstrom 2004; 2007; Andreas 2008). Simultaneously, the fate of Barta'a as a site of lucrative economic gain for both traders and other actors in the village is dependent on the Israeli authorities maintaining a limited presence at the Green Line so as to allow the free movement of Israeli customers to the village.

This means that the success of Barta'a has become dependent on both a visible (Separation Wall) and an invisible (Green Line) 'border' as controlled by the Israeli military; to resist or challenge these 'borders' that are both constructed and managed by their coloniser would, therefore, contest the very source of their economic gain (see Donnan and Wilson 1999). But most importantly, the role of such 'borders' to support the ongoing profitability of those in Barta'a is contingent on the village remaining a site of stability and limited political resistance to Israel. This then requires both Palestinian traders and the local community to be co-opted by Israel to ensure the appropriate balance between security and profit is maintained (see Galemba 2013). The study of Barta'a, therefore, presents an example of how GFB activity has prevailed due to a process of deterritorialisation, but also how the socio-economic and political trajectory of an entire village is tied to the market.

This chapter will unpack these issues through the following structure. *Section One* provides a historical context of the rise of Barta'a as a uniquely divided village in the aftermath of the 1949 Armistice Agreement. *Section Two* explores the deterritorialising impact of the Separation Wall in response to the Second Intifada. *Section Three* considers the main consumer base and typologies of

trade found in Barta'a due to the comparatively 'invisible' Green Line. *Section Four* explores how GFB activity in Barta'a contributes towards the political pacification of those that benefit from the Barta'a market place. I comment upon the overriding influence of the Israeli authorities and also the local Kabha community. *Section Five* serves as a conclusion.

Before proceeding, it is, however, important to recognise that the mere use of the term 'border' throughout this chapter- and thesis more broadly- is problematic, as is the challenge of looking to more common literature on transborder trade where the 'border' is, at least in principle, considered the formal demarcation of two sovereign entities (Wilson and Donna 1998; Brunet-Jailly 2005). Studies on the relationship between, for example, border communities and the state, is also generally that between a sovereign state authority and its citizens on a territory within the state's formal borders (Donnan and Wilson 1999, p.4) – even if the state has a limited role in local governance. Though particularly complex transborder trade environments can be found in, for example, the demilitarised buffer zone in Cyprus (Papadakis 1997), Spanish exclaves in the Cerdanya Valley in Southern France (Sahlin 1989; 1998) or Ceuta in Northern Morocco (Buoli 2014; Castan-Pinos 2009), in colonised Palestine, Israel has never formally claimed its 'borders' nor recognised any Palestinian legitimacy to declaring their own (Falah 2005).

This chapter will show that in Barta'a it is, therefore, primarily a relationship between a Palestinian border community and the Israeli state, with only a nominal role of the PA to whom the community should officially be governed by. This dynamic reaffirms why when studying Palestine, and in this case Barta'a, it is necessary to remain conscious of its particular paradigm as a people under Israel's settler colonial project. Borders, be they referenced as the Green Line or the Separation Wall, are, as commented upon in *Chapter Four*, more accurately considered as settler colonial frontiers that enable Israel to unrestrictedly enact its authority over Palestinians while perennially leaving the space for the future colonisation of Palestinian land (see Wolfe 2006). This chapter is neither a theoretical study of 'borders' in Israel-Palestine, nor an analysis of the long term implications of this particular dynamic, but rather the more imminent consequences of deterritorialisation on the GFB economy that is partly due to the

'border' dynamic of Barta'a. The reader must, therefore, consistently remind themselves of this context when they see the word 'border' throughout this chapter.

SECTION ONE: THE RISE OF THE DETERRITORIALISED BARTA'A

MARKET

The village of Barta'a begun to develop in the late 19th Century after a shepherd from the nearby village of Yabad found a water hole to serve his cattle, soon after he brought his family to settle and the village grew (Raed Kabha, April 2018). The shepherd was from the Kabha tribe, the great grandfather of Raed Ahmed Kabha who was introduced earlier. As a result the majority of Palestinians in Barta'a, both East Barta'a and West Barta'a share the same lineage. The Kabha tribe continue to be the principal landowners and the Kabha family tree in Barta'a spans intricately across the many residents who continue to inhabit the village and the nearby areas (Kabha 2017). But, following the 1948 Nakba and subsequent 1949 Armistice Agreement between the newly founded State of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan the small village of Barta'a experienced its first major rupture. A decision was made to primarily use the landscape rather than the demographics of the area to dictate the Green Line (Ibid., p.63).

As a result, the Wadi became the border and overnight the villagers of Barta'a and the members of the Kabha tribe were split in two. Some would become citizens of Israel (West Barta'a) and the others would reside under Jordanian rule (East Barta'a). In the years that followed the official border did not serve to notably impede movement as Palestinians would continue to walk across the Green Line to, for example, visit family members or smuggle goods (Medzini 2016, p.7). But, in 1956 a barrier was installed and manned by the Jordanian army on the one side and to a lesser extent the Israeli military on the other (Amara and Kabaha 1996, p.24). From this point onwards a progressive economic, political and societal divergence emerged between the two sides of the village under their differing governing authorities - Barta'a became a village with a "split personality" (Aisenburg 2000, p.87; see also Amara 1999; Amara and Kabaha 1996; Amara and Spolsky 2001; Medzini 2016; Kabha 2017).

However, nineteen years later following Israel's full occupation of the West Bank in the aftermath of the 1967 'Six Day War' the physical separation between the two villages ceased as the Green Line became scarcely more than an 'internal administrative boundary' (Medzini 2016, p.4). Nevertheless, this did not alter the formal citizenship status and, therefore, how those in East Barta'a and West Barta'a were governed; so the quasi reunification of the village did little to reverse the over a decade of split trajectories of the villages and its villagers (Grossman 1988; Aisenberg 2000; Totry 2008). Barta'a was, of course, not the only Palestinian village to experience such a radical transition as Cohen identified in his early research throughout the Arab villages of 'The Triangle' where he highlighted particular themes that prevailed under what he termed 'The Border Situation' in the aftermath of the events of 1948/9. For those Palestinians on the Israeli side of the Green Line it meant progressive isolation from their land and families; heightened integration with Israel and particularly its economy for work opportunities; while such villages suddenly adopted key strategic significance to the Israeli authorities due to both their Palestinian populations and their geographic location (1965, p.11-18).

In the immediate years following the PER Barta'a did not experience any drastic transition towards becoming a notable economic hub. Consumers from Israel preferred to drive into northern West Bank towns such as Jenin to exploit cheaper Palestinian market place prices, enjoy Arab cuisine or to visit family members who were unable to enter Israel (Field notes, May 2018). As such, the majority of those who crossed from Israel were Palestinian Citizens of Israel. Though Jewish Israeli's also frequented Palestinian towns having enjoyed comparatively free movement into the territories since 1967, they too sought to take advantage of lower Palestinian prices for consumer products and services (Forte 2001, p.214-5). Barta'a was not even a passageway for Israeli vehicles to pass through to the West Bank, but was just a small, predominantly agricultural, village (Field notes, May 2018)

This all begun to change with the more aggressive enactment of Israeli 'closure' policy in the 1990s that saw movement to and from the West Bank increasingly challenged (see Roy 2004). In response, Palestinian villages that straddled the Green Line increasingly became hubs of economic activity for Israeli's (both non-

Jews and Jews) who were either less able or unwilling to enter the West Bank. The village of Baqa about 10km south of Barta'a was the most prominent example in the nearby area. The village increasingly became home to Palestinian merchants who set up wholesale and retail outlets to supply Israeli consumers (Field notes, Sept. 2017).



Figure 20 Map of divided Barta'a (note the 1949 Armistice Line) (Google Maps, 2019)

The fate of Baqa was, however, dealt a critical blow in 2000 when the village was split with the construction of the Separation Barrier along the Green Line. Quite literally, cutting off the main road that took customers from Israel into the West Bank. The Hamarshe brothers were amongst those who were forced to leave. Ali, commented on the suddenness of this as the Israeli army provided demolition orders for the shops along the Green Line to make way for the wall, leaving many traders having to rush to save their merchandise. Overnight Israeli customers could no longer access the Palestinian side which became Baqa Al-Sharqiya (East Baqa) while Baqa Al-Gharbiya (West Baqa) fell under Israeli control. The West Bank traders had completely lost their comparative advantage and consumer base. This prompted many to find the nearest alternative, Barta'a:

Now there is nothing called Baqa. (Ali Hamarshe, May 2018).



Figure 21 View of Baqa Al-Gharbiya across the Separation Wall from the West Bank side (Activestills 2015)

The Barta'a market place had started to grow from the late 1990s, but it was mainly local residents who sourced goods in comparatively small quantities from nearby West Bank cities such as Jenin, and then sold them in Barta'a (Field notes, Sept. 2018). As a primarily agricultural community on the eve of the PER, Barta'a and its residents were not known for their commercial prowess (Field notes, May 2018; see also Amara and Spolsky 1997). As such, it is estimated that they constitute only about 5-10% of the trader community in the village (Field notes, May 2018). And rather than cheap goods it was actually the more affordable car repair shops that initially attracted Israeli's to Barta'a (Ibid.). This is because during heightened 'closure' policy the movement of vehicles between Israel and the Palestinian territories faced particularly stringent security restrictions and delays. Going to a West Bank garage was increasingly untenable. But, over time and with the collapse of Baqa it became apparent that Barta'a presented the most viable opportunity for West Bank traders who sought to benefit from the lucrative cross-border trade economy.

The Second Intifada, in particular, propelled the rise of Barta'a and the movement of West Bank merchants to the village. This commenced with traders from nearby Jenin who had suffered from the local drop in commerce due to the fall in costumers coming from Israel, but also the curfews imposed on Palestinian towns and villages that stifled overall market place activity (see Aljuni 2003; World Bank 2004). Soon after, traders from other prominent economic centres in Palestine, in particular, Hebron and Nablus, established businesses in Barta'a (Field notes,

Sept. 2017). Importantly, at this time it was still possible to travel to the village without an Israeli approved permit. And so, while their counterparts in the West Bank suffered the most notable economic crisis since the PER, for traders with access to Barta'a the Second Intifada became a period of the most lucrative business -the "golden years"- as they began to monopolise the market for Israeli consumers who continued to seek low Palestinian prices but were unwilling, or unable, to travel into the West bank.

It was in these years that the brothers -like many other traders I interviewed who were in Barta'a during this time- would often spend weeks sleeping in their stores to take advantage of the business opportunities while it was also often too dangerous to return to their West Bank homes during the heightened periods of violence or due to Israeli closure of the checkpoints (Field notes, Sept. 2017; see also Totry 2008, p.46). At a time of rapidly expanding Chinese imports into Palestine, it was such goods that began to dominate the Barta'a market place. Barta'a's imports from China are included under the trade figures of Jenin and between 2005 and 2016 Chinese imports to Jenin grew by over 600%, and by just under 550% to all of the West Bank.⁷⁶

SECTION TWO: WALLED INTO OPPORTUNITY, WALLED FROM OVERSIGHT - "WE ARE THE GOVERNMENT"

Barta'a's fate as a preeminent hub of Palestinian GFB was sealed in 2003 with the construction of the illegal, and supposedly temporary, Separation Wall that continues to disconnect the village from the West Bank while simultaneously serving to de-facto annex almost 10% of the West Bank (Hareuveni et al. 2012, p.13; see also Falah 2005; Sa'dil 2010; Abdallah and Parizot 2015). The closest 'crossing' is now the Reihan Checkpoint about 3-4km away that -as with the barrier throughout the rest of the oPt- officially serves as a 'security' border, and not a formal political demarcation of authority (Medzini 2016). This means that as the barrier lies on the Palestinian side of the Green Line, officially villages like Barta'a remain under the governance of the PA. But, as crossing the checkpoint

⁷⁶ Specifically 602% in the case of Jenin, from \$4,823,000 in 2005 to \$29,015,000 in 2016. 548% for all of the West Bank, from \$65,006,000 in 2005 to \$356,114,000 in 2016.

requires Israeli approved permits, PA officials cannot freely enter the village to enact any credible form of authority.

Barta'a is, therefore, an almost fully deterritorialised space in the de-facto Israeli controlled Seam Zone that in 2013 was home to an estimated 11,00 Palestinians across the West Bank (UN OCHA 2013): a number that could rise to 50,000 upon completion of the Separation Wall (UN OCHA 2007).⁷⁷ A phenomenon akin to Veracini's (2010, p.44-45) notion of 'non-diplomatic transfer', whereby the indigenous population is supposedly ceded a degree of sovereign rule in a particular territory (i.e. the West Bank more broadly), while in reality, in the case of Barta'a Israel completely mitigates this through its preeminent control over who can cross the checkpoint, and therefore what is able to transpire in the village. By all intents and purposes, once a Palestinian has crossed Reihan, they have left the West Bank.

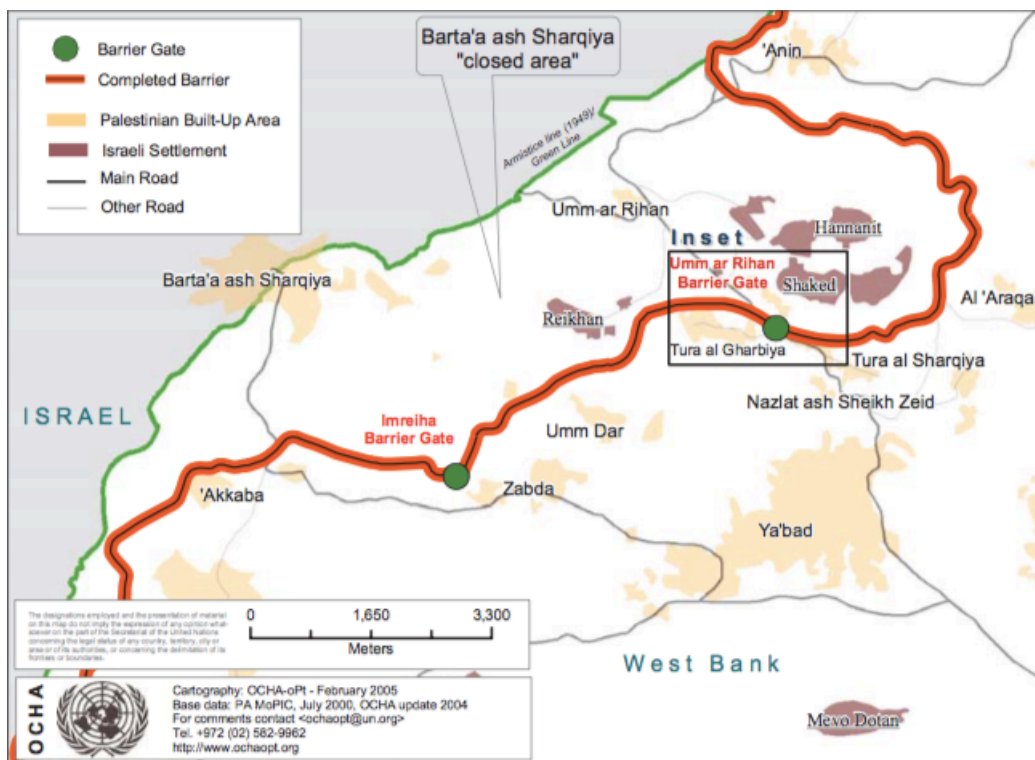


Figure 22 Map of the Separation Wall and Green Line around Barta'a (OCHA 2005)

⁷⁷ Barta'a is, of course, not the only Palestinian village to be caught in the Seam Zone. Saleh's (2012) study of the Palestinian village of Walaja near Jerusalem is furthermore evidence of the detrimental impact on the Separation Wall and the associated Israeli policies that seek to dispossess Palestinians of their land and rights in the absence of any credible governing authority to protect them. For a detailed appreciation of the range of Seam Zone sites and the affiliated difficulties for Palestinians that must access this space it is also worth following the work of Israeli NGO Machsom Watch. See: www.machsomwatch.org.

Under such conditions, traders in Barta'a find themselves in a position where they regularly feel that "we are the government" (Ali Hamarshe, Sept. 2017), as the absence of the PA both legitimises and necessitates them to take an active role in how they conduct their business; thus shaping a balance between 'legality' and 'licitness' unique to Barta'a. This is reflected when considering how the deterritorialised state of Barta'a presents different opportunities for traders to profit more than their West Bank counterparts. Such as how traders both register and operate their business in a manner that aids their ability to 'illegally' under or non-declare their trade - both what they source and sell. While weak PA governance in the West Bank in general, but particularly so in Barta'a, validates a traders perspective that the PA is not entitled to their taxes in the first place. A sentiment that legitimises the misreporting of commercial activity, and subsequent tax avoidance, as a 'licit' act. Such practices not only continue to undermine the ability to know the true value or scale of trade in Barta'a, but also discredits trade statistics between Israel and Palestine more broadly. Some notable examples to demonstrate this dynamic are considered below.

2.1. THE BARTA'A "FREE" MARKET

This is just for me. the PA cannot enter here so people here do what they want - they are free. (Field notes, May 2018).

Firstly, a prospective Barta'a trader must register at the Barta'a municipality and the Jenin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and then seek their permit to cross the checkpoint from the Israeli District Coordination Office (DCO) in Salem, near Jenin. They are, however, not required to register with the Jenin tax authority to whom other West Bank traders must submit their official sales declarations. In Barta'a, the PA cannot check the business by, for example, visiting the shop. This means that even though a trader has formerly opened a business, he is not fully accountable. This is why it is common to see traders simply jot down the details of their day's trade in a personal note pad (Field notes, May 2018).

In the case of Barta'a residents who conduct small scale trade or services it is even easier to avoid scrutiny, as they can operate almost fully outside the purview of the PA as -unlike non-Barta'a residents- they do not need to register their

businesses in order to receive a permit to access the village (Field notes, June 2018). It is generally only Barta'a's larger traders, particularly those who import under their name, and therefore must have a "file" with the tax authorities, who are more pressured to declare their sales. But, even in such cases these traders may just register 30% of their sales, whereas if they had a shop in Jenin, they might state 50% as there is a chance that the PA could physically come to their shop and monitor their trade (Field notes, April 2019):

It's not easy for the customs or tax department to go to Barta'a. I am the Director General of the Jenin Chamber of Commerce, I sign the documents for having the permits for Barta'a' and I don't have a permit to go to Barta'a. (Mohammad Kmail, Director General of the Jenin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, June 2018).

Secondly, unlike their West Bank counterparts Barta'a merchants have their container delivered from Israeli ports of entry (such as Ashdod or nearby Haifa) straight to the village without crossing a checkpoint. This means that the PA cannot physically monitor the goods that Barta'a traders have imported (Field notes, April 2019). For example, the Palestinian customs authority can neither stop and check the container en-route to Barta'a, nor conduct follow up checks in the market. So, even though the PA will have a log of the import declarations of Barta'a importers based on the data submitted by the Israeli authorities, it is difficult to challenge these declarations if they are deemed irregular.

This adds a further complexity to calculating Israel-Palestine trade as imports from Israel also do not have to cross any checkpoints that require official documentation, i.e. the unified invoice (Maqasa) from which the PA derives VAT reimbursements from the Israeli treasury.⁷⁸ There is, therefore, opportunity for a greater degree of flexibility over the Maqasa that is produced, allowing for heightened under declaration as the value of the corresponding goods cannot be checked by the Palestinian customs authority. It also enables Barta'a traders to buy from an Israeli supplier without a Maqasa. This is particularly feasible for imports from Israel of smaller quantities whereby a Barta'a trader might just have

⁷⁸ For a greater understanding of how Palestine-Israel trade is recorded, specifically the use of the 'unified invoice' see Elkhafif et al. (2014).

a regular receipt from their Israeli supplier, rather than a Maqasa that would identify it as officially Israeli exports to Palestine (Field notes, June 2018). The PA cannot monitor nor collect Maqasa revenues from such commerce as these transactions would de facto appear as domestic Israeli trade. A Barta'a traders under or non-declared imports to Barta'a naturally also has a knock on effect in terms of their registered sales; specifically, If a container of goods is never registered then the pressure to declare the selling of them is reduced even less.



Figure 23 Busy shopping street in Barta'a

2.2. WHY PAY THE PA?

This is our money...we are not thieves they [the PA] are the thieves.

(Field notes, July 2018).

The heightened capacity to under or non-declare trade is, however, not just due to the practicalities of doing business in Barta'a. Rather, the deterritorialisation of PA governance empowers traders to more actively enact their unwillingness to abide by the regulations under which they should operate; specifically, in terms of adherence to paying taxes associated to their business activities. This perspective derives from a common sentiment amongst the West Bank traders who I interviewed who felt that the PA is a corrupt, crony and illegitimate entity that does not provide, for example, the necessary services for its people such as healthcare, education or infrastructure (Field notes, June 2018). A 2014 opinion poll showed that after the occupation and Israeli settlements, at 29%, corruption was considered the second largest problem in Palestine at 25% (Dana 2015b).

In fact, as most local services are heavily invested in by foreign donors, most traders I interviewed were further frustrated by trying to comprehend where their taxes were spent (see Hever 2010, p.10). And importantly, the logic of being taxed by the PA while being militarily occupied by Israel, is considered wholly incompatible (Field notes, June 2018). This perspective is, unsurprisingly, heightened in Barta'a, as by all intents and purposes, the PA does not play any effective role to the livelihood of traders so they feel that it should not be entitled to their money. A further reason for the sentiment of, "we are the government":

The government here are a mafia. Palestine Inc., not the PA...just take the money. (Field notes, Sept. 2017).

Again, a common example is the resistance of larger Barta'a traders to accurately record their imports from Israeli suppliers through a Maqasa. As with their West Bank counterparts, they feel that the PA does not effectively reimburse them, either through the appropriate allocation of credit to offset the VAT they paid to their Israeli supplier, or the provision of local services. Instead, they see the VAT that Israel transfers to the PA from such trade as only lining the pockets of PA officials while not declaring this trade also raises the merchants profits (Ibid.; see also World Bank 2016, p.14-17):

We wave goodbye to this. (As Abed Hamarshe showed me a copy of a Maqasa. Field notes, Sept. 2017).

Unsurprisingly, Barta'a traders routinely seek to limit this loss and are able to do so by either under declaring the Maqasa or, quite simply, not declaring it at all. This is possible because the Palestinian customs authorities are unable to claim the VAT from the Israeli Treasury without the corresponding Maqasa declaration submitted by the Palestinian trader, the Palestinian Invoice (P) (Elkhafif et al. 1994, p.28).⁷⁹ A 2010 IMF study estimated that between 30-70% of such transactions go unregistered (Ibid.). By so doing, lowering the registered value of Israel-Palestine trade, further undermining Palestinian trade data. In 2012, the

⁷⁹ Even if the PA is aware of the transaction based on the copy of an Israeli Invoice (I), if the PI is not submitted within 6 months the PA can no longer claim the VAT from Israel.

estimated non-declaration of Palestinian imports from Israel was approximately \$103.7 million (World Bank 2016, p.17):

We do this because they do not take care of us so why should we pay all the taxes. They take our money and cheat us and give us nothing. (Field notes, May 2018).

What is particularly worrying is that Palestinian traders in Barta'a who source goods from the West Bank occasionally register the transaction under the name of an Israeli businessman with whom they have good relations. It is, therefore, recorded with a Maqasa as a Palestinian export to Israel rather than internal Palestinian trade. This is often done because logistically it can be faster to transport goods through commercial checkpoints in the south -such as Tarkumia (Hebron)- and then up to Barta'a via Israeli roads, rather than through the West Bank and across the comparatively underequipped and consistently delayed Reihan checkpoint that must be used if it is registered as internal Palestinian trade. Traders also often feel that if a container is supposedly destined for an Israeli client it is less likely to face heightened delays (Field notes, May 2018).

This form of trade requires the PA to reimburse the Israeli treasury with the Palestinian VAT which will then -without the complications found in Palestine- be reimbursed to the Israeli company even though they are not the actual beneficiary of the goods; essentially, money for nothing while further contributing towards misleading trade statistics between Israel and Palestine. This type of fraudulent invoicing is uncommon and not isolated to Barta'a, but nevertheless one trader who occasionally does this told me:

It's is a gift to my Israeli friend. They are big business partners of mine who I know for many years. It has to be someone I trust. I have already paid the VAT so what is the difference. It is good for my business relations with Israel. (Field notes, Sept. 2017).

This section has shown how the deterritorialisation of Barta'a presents traders with a unique environment that allows (il) licit acts characteristic of GFB to prevail. Importantly, these practices are neither just a reflection of the absence of effective

governance -by both the PA and Israeli authorities- nor only the result of some of the unique methods in which trade is conducted in Barta'a, e.g. having containers delivered directly to the village and the ability to more flexibly document transactions. But are also driven by a deeper rooted sentiment amongst traders that the PA is not entitled to their taxes as a non-legitimate governing body in general and in Barta'a in particular; a traders evasion of certain rules and regulations are, therefore, deemed 'licit'. As a result, the rampant and 'illegal' under or non-declaration of trade means that there is no credible manner to truly comprehend the level of commerce in Barta'a, in turn undermining any formal estimations of internal Palestine, China-Palestine and Israel-Palestine trade.

It is, however, not just the (il) licit economic practices that are able to prevail in Barta'a that enable traders to profit, but also because the market's primary consumer base is not actually West Bank Palestinians. Instead, traders profit from a more sustainable flow of Israeli consumers, with a higher disposable income than their West Bank counterparts, who are able to cross the Green Line with comparative ease. This broader range of customers married with the unique market conditions in Barta'a helps to drive both a retail and wholesale trade economy underpinned by Chinese goods.

SECTION THREE: THE 'INVISIBLE' GREEN LINE

He is a Jew, they are Druze, he is from Ramallah, we are from Yabad and you are British. Barta'a is the only place in Palestine where this can happen. (Ali Hamarshe, Sept. 2017).

The Separation Wall is not the only 'border' that defines the lucrativeness of the Barta'a market place, as simultaneously, the villages ongoing accessibility to the Israeli consumer market is ensured as the Green Line (Wadi) has still not been demarcated with any form of border wall or fence. This means that an Israeli consumer can travel into an officially Palestinian market place without crossing a checkpoint while Palestinian traders in Barta'a can conduct business as neither fully governed by the PA, nor the Israeli authorities. The competitiveness of Barta'a is, therefore, not just in relation to other West Bank sites, but also to the Israeli market place, including vendors in Barta'a West who must adhere to Israeli

state rules and regulations. This includes, for example, the proper declaration of taxes, e.g. VAT, payment of necessary business insurances and the provision of social insurance to employees: these type of supplementary payments can constitute almost half the potential profit of an Israeli shop owner (Field notes, June 2018). To best demonstrate the profitability derived from the comparatively invisible border, it is useful to consider the range of customers and types of business that are able to prevail, as discussed below.

Over the course of a week it is possible to identify variations over not just the peaks and troughs of business activity but the profile of the shoppers who come to Barta'a. This is particularly apparent over the weekend. Once the market opens following Friday prayers many Palestinian Citizens of Israel start to arrive, on Saturday -the busiest day of the week- more Jewish Israeli's appear and on Sunday it is the turn of the Palestinian Christians, the members of the Druze community generally parallel the days off followed by Jewish Israeli's. There are no formal statistics, but overall, it is the Palestinian Citizens of Israel that dominate the Barta'a market throughout the week, representing 90-95% of the consumer base with the remaining 5% constituting Jewish Israeli (Field notes, Sept. 2017). This is, of course, particularly common for border markets where the majority of consumers are those that have crossed to access generally cheaper or a wider range of goods than is available in their home market. These actors can similarly be found in other literature referred to as, amongst other names, 'ant traders', 'shuttle traders' and 'trader tourists' (Donnan and Wilson 1999; Gauthier 2012; Rabossi 2012; Holzlehner 2014).

The Jewish Israeli's who visit on a Saturday give a useful insight into the predominant profile of Jewish customers found in Barta'a. It would seem contradictory to the expectations of Shabbat that Jewish Israeli's should be out shopping, least of all in a Palestinian village. But, this is explained by most Jewish Israeli's who visit Barta'a appearing to be secular and are predominantly of Russian or former Soviet Union descent: a community that regularly opposes the Israeli state's proposals to close all businesses on Shabbat.⁸⁰ This is evident by

⁸⁰ Importantly, the term 'Russian Israeli/Jew' tends to be a hold all category that is regularly used not just to refer to Russians, but also those from the former Soviet Union in Central and Eastern Europe.

a 2015 PEW survey where 81% of former Soviet Union Israeli's identified as secular, with the same statistic for those that disagreed with state law, such as the shutting of public transportation on Shabbat being directed by Jewish law (Theodorou 2016). Many Russian Israeli's live in nearby towns in the north of Israel -close to Barta'a- where they have been settled since the 1990s, such as Hadera. But I also met many from elsewhere in Israel that had driven many hours to get to the village.⁸¹ Interestingly, a common way to identify this community is by their poor quality of Hebrew, many having only relocated to Israel in recent years. This makes interactions with Barta'a' traders particularly poignant as often the Palestinians will actually speak better Hebrew:⁸²

He is an Israeli, he is on my land. But I speak his language better than him. (Abed Hamarshe, May 2018).

The Russian Jewish consumer base in Israel also has a reputation amongst Barta'a traders for seeking cost-savings, and in addition to bargain consumer goods from China, it is important to note that Barta'a is also a source for cheaper groceries, particularly meat, and other food and beverage that attract Russian Israeli's (Field notes, May 2018). Also, Russian Israeli's visit Barta'a because they too are often shopkeepers of small kiosks in Israel. Therefore, many come to Barta'a to purchase small quantities of goods to fill their stores, such as tobacco and snacks (Ibid.).⁸³

Ashkenazi Israeli's also frequent Barta'a to make cost-saving purchases, but in fact, many of those I encountered were not consumers but suppliers of goods to be sold in Barta'a. These products are also often 'Made in China' but Palestinian

⁸¹ For example, a young Israeli couple I met from Tel Aviv. The man moved to Israel from Kazakhstan 15 years ago and his wife was Russian. They drove an hour and a half to visit Barta'a. The shop owner stressed to me the significance of this when one can travel across the length of Israel in about four hours so the couple would only be visiting Barta'a if they were certain that it had something unique to offer not found elsewhere in Israel (Field notes, Sept. 2017).

⁸² The sociolinguistic impact of the division of Barta'a is studied by Amara 1999; Samara and Kabaha 1996; Amara and Spolsky 2001.

⁸³ Barta'a is a source of the cheaper Palestinian 'Araby' cigarettes that can often be found -illegally- in smaller Israeli kiosks. On many occasions Palestinian tobacco growers in the nearby village of Yabad commented that Russian Israeli's were strong customers in Israel.

traders are at times forced to source from an Israeli supplier that holds the distribution license or because the trader cannot import at the equivalent levels of an Israeli company to access the necessary discount from the Chinese manufacturer (Abed Hamarshe, May 2018). Barta'a is, therefore, an additional outlet for these Israeli suppliers as cost saving customers from Israel will travel to the village to take advantage of the Palestinian traders willingness to accept lower margins than vendors inside Israel.

This is a particularly unique model of the circulation of goods in transborder trade, whereby merchants from one state are selling their goods to vendors of a second political authority, for them to re-sell them back to customers from the state of the suppliers. This also highlights that though Barta'a' seemingly represents a unique case of Israel-Palestine trade it is important to consider that very little of this commerce -specifically, in terms of Palestinians selling to Israeli's- is between Palestinians and Jewish Israeli's. This somewhat undermines the notion that villages like Barta'a are a microcosm for the virtues of economic peace through the opportunities for day to day trading between the two communities. But rather, it is commerce with Palestinian Citizens of Israel that has always been the predominant driver of the Barta'a market place.

I highlighted in *Chapter Five* why Palestinians Citizens of Israel are drawn to the Palestinian market place due to the comparative cost advantage. Barta'a is well placed geographically for this consumer base as it sits in easy reach of the Arab towns and villages in the north of Israel, an area referred to as 'The Triangle', as well as large urban centres with notable Arab populations such as Nazareth and Haifa. This is also why the principle West Bank city that Palestinian Citizens of Israel travel to is the northern city of Jenin: the main city of the Jenin Governate to which Barta'a belongs. In 2017, 920,000 Israeli cars came to Jenin bringing an estimated 2.5 million visitors, mostly for shopping or to procure local services. If based on \$100 spent per visitor that would equate to \$250 million (Mohamad Kmail, Director General of the Jenin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, June 2018). The significance of this consumer group is integral to an understanding of Barta'a because it is not only these customers that also visit Barta'a, but importantly, when they are unable to visit cities such as Jenin -due to, for example, checkpoint closures- then they are still able to go to Barta'a.

This was the case during the Second Intifada, but also until the late 2000s, at which point the Israeli authorities became more flexible in allowing -even encouraging- Palestinian Citizens of Israel to visit the West Bank to support Palestinian economic growth as part of the broader 'economic peace' initiative since 2009 (Shehadeh and Khalidi 2014, p.19-20). Yet, routine disruptions occur and are often not even associated to political instability. I witnessed this first hand during the Jewish holiday period of Yom Kippur. The normally active weekend market in Jenin was quiet because the Jalameh (Jenin's main checkpoint with Israel) crossing was closed, whereas West Bank traders were still crossing to Barta'a at the Reihan checkpoint to serve their Palestinian Citizen of Israel customers (Field notes, Sept. 2017):

If Jenin is closed, the border is closed, people will go to Barta'a. This is the formula. When it's so much here it's less in Barta'a, when it's less here it's so much more in Barta'a. (Mohamad Kmail, Director General of the Jenin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, June 2018).

As with Russian Israeli customers many Palestinian Citizens of Israel do not just come to Barta'a for retail consumption. Barta'a is also a wholesale outlet for traders in Israel dealing in generally lower quality and priced goods, predominantly from China. Therefore, many Arab traders in major cities such as Nazareth purchase some of their goods from Barta'a to stock their shops or to supplement them with goods that are more difficult to source from Israeli suppliers (Field notes, June 2018). Smaller traders in Israel who do not have import licenses or are seeking to avoid the complexities of importing goods directly are similarly able to benefit (Ibid.).

This practice is particularly appealing to Israel based traders that come to source 'counterfeit' goods such as clothing and shoes from China. The village's role as a 'transit' zone for such goods is in line with a longstanding practice whereby Israeli traders rely upon their Palestinian counterparts to import such goods before smuggling them back into Israel (Natsheh and Parizot 2016). Border markets across the world serve similar functions where, for example, a neighbouring country might more strictly enforce regulation to protect the importation of such goods (Schendel 2005; Neuwirth 2011; Rabossi 2012). The

rationale for this is aptly summarised by the comment of one such trader that partakes in this business:

The Palestinian takes all the risk. If the Israeli is caught importing these goods they could face serious fines and have their import licences taken away. If they buy it in Barta'a all the risk is on the Palestinian side. (Trader, May 2018).

The deterritorialisation of Barta'a, therefore, presents traders with a unique platform to pursue lucrative economic gain not just from an environment that allows (il) licit practices characteristic of GFB to prevail, but also from access to a more sustainable and higher disposable income consumer base. Moreover, the market functions as an integral node for the circulation of goods in multiple directions: between Israel and Palestine (both ways), but also within the Israeli economy as many Barta'a traders buy from Israeli suppliers to then sell them back to Israeli customers, or Israeli merchants use Barta'a as a transit site to get particular goods into the Israeli market. Yet, traders know that the livelihood offered in Barta'a is ultimately a unique freedom, and if either the local Barta'a Municipality and the Kabha community, or specifically the Israeli authorities wished to withdraw this privilege from a specific trader or all Palestinians in Barta'a then they are able to. What therefore matters is stability in Barta'a. This appears to be something that most traders -and importantly, other actors that actively benefit from the lucrative opportunities Barta'a presents- are willing to oblige.

SECTION FOUR: THE POLITICAL PACIFICATION OF BARTA'A - **"BARTA'A IS A SILENT VILLAGE"**

If there is a struggle in Ramallah Barta'a is quiet. Everyone here is afraid of his income. (Abed Hamarshe, May 2018).

During my most extensive period of field work in Barta'a it was a time of instability across much of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A culmination of the 60th anniversary of the Nakba, the enactment of President Trump's decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem, and a mounting death count on the Gaza border

by Israeli sniper fire. Yet, as I left Ramallah at the height of protests and general strikes taking place in the city, any such sentiment in Barta'a's was subdued, if even identifiable. As some checkpoints in the West Bank became sites of tension, the Reihan checkpoint was not a place of coordinated protest and disturbance. Though traders in Barta'a appreciated the general strike called in the West Bank it was wherever possible business as usual. As Palestinians in Israel took part in strikes and protested in solidarity with Gazans, the assumption was that on such days the shops in Barta'a might also be closed. On that same day as I stood with Abed in front of the shop he informed me that he received about ten calls from his Israeli customers checking to see if he was in Barta'a. His shop, and those of his neighbours, were open.

Stability in Barta'a but instability in the West Bank -exemplified during the Second Intifada- has since the beginning underpinned Barta'a's competitive advantage. A similar situation can be found in other border market sites where 'conflict' is formally dividing the two nations, but its merchants have remained steadfast in exploiting the often lucrative commercial opportunities that often only they can mediate through illegal channels and practices (e.g., De Waal 2013; Nordstrom 2008). This, of course, does mean that Barta'a traders actively desire trouble in the West Bank, but it is insightful when I posed to the Hamarshe brothers -and other traders- a scenario where the Separation Wall was removed as part of a broader peace initiative:

To be honest if there is peace Barta'a is closed in a few days. The conflict is better for us. Everyone will go to Jenin or to the other cities to do their shopping as they will have access to all the goods in the West Bank and they will be cheaper. So maybe I can say I don't want peace. (Ali Hamarshe, Sept. 2017).

This perspective provides an important insight into the dilemma Barta'a traders are caught in. As one of the preeminent examples of segregation and the tool that has so successfully supported Israel to both control and annex Palestinian territory, the Separation Wall is simultaneously (as discussed in *Section One*) a leading factor in creating the lucrative rewards of Barta'a's GFB economy. The fear of being cut off from access to Barta'a from the West Bank (Reihan

Checkpoint) or their Israeli customers not being able to cross the Wadi (Green Line), are significant concerns for the viability of the Barta'a trade economy. To date, it has been avoided -in large- because of the stability found in Barta'a, and Palestinian acquiescence to maintaining it. The pressure for traders to conform to this requirement can be highlighted by a consideration of, firstly, the preeminent control of the Israeli authorities, and secondly, the influence of the local Barta'a community. In both instances, contributing towards the regulation of non-local traders to behave in a manner that keeps Barta'a a "silent village" (Field notes, May 2018).

4.1. ISRAEL'S (IN) VISIBLE HAND IN THE MARKET

In recent years Barta'a's West Bank traders have not been routinely exposed to the risk of being cut off from the village, nevertheless, every so often they are reminded of the omnipresent risk of this occurring. This was the case as recently as April 2018 when a Palestinian supposedly transferring explosives across the Reihan checkpoint to carry out a terrorist attack in Israel was caught (Kubovich et al. 2018). This resulted in the checkpoint being completely closed for over two days. No traders, labourers, Barta'a residents nor goods could pass (Field notes, Sept. 2018). Such collective punishment silenced the Barta'a market place and trapped the village residents in the enclave. Some traders found a way to bypass the closure but by in large business was lost all around.⁸⁴

These incidents spark concern of further Israeli reprisal. Most notably is the possibility of Israel installing some form of fence or even constructing a wall along the Green Line, and putting an end to the 'invisible' border between East Barta'a and West Barta'a. In the process, eliminating the unique conditions that have made the village such a profitable site of GFB. Indeed, only a month earlier a Kabha from Barta'a drove into a group of Israeli soldiers along the road to Jenin:

⁸⁴ It is beyond the remit of this chapter to comprehensively analyse all periods of Barta'a's history, and specifically any cases of instability. It is, however, worth noting that during both the First and Second Intifada, but particularly the former, the village did experience social unrest. Of noteworthy was the varied responses by those from East and West Barta'a, with those on the Israeli side engaged far less in any form of civil disobedience. For more detail about the village during this period see: Aisenberg 2000; Totry 2008; Kabha 2017.

two died and two were severely injured. The resident proclaimed it to be an accident yet he was immediately branded a terrorist by Israeli state officials and the military. Soon after many of his relatives in Barta'a had their work permits revoked and his family home was filled with concrete by the Israeli military. At the time, certain right wing Knesset members called for the death penalty as military officials considered the need for a 'wall' and physical separation between the two Barta'a's (Harel 2018; Murphy 2018).

Though nothing has materialised the threat remains as I experienced on the final day of my 2018 field trip to Barta'a (July 9th). The Israeli military entered Barta'a and allocated demolition orders to about twenty homes that had been constructed 'illegally' on the banks of the Wadi. Many nearby shops were warned that they too were at risk. The general consensus was that it was a combination of Israel reminding Barta'a not to overstep its boundaries, and again, that the possibility of some form of physical division remained a possibility. This time many traders felt that it was possibly in response to a heightened number of Barta'a permit holders who had been found in Israel. This latest provocation in the Wadi was considered a sign that Israel may now be serious about challenging the status quo. More recently, Israeli security incursions into Barta'a are to arrest Palestinians without a permit. Generally, these are not trade related employees but are illegal labourers who work on nearby construction projects, such as the new build Israeli settlement of Harish a few kilometres away (Field notes, July 2018):

They will build a new wall or fence, many people are saying this. (Field notes, July 2018).

Such instances highlight scholarly contentions that there is a constant balancing act between 'security' and 'profit' at the border as seen by the state – in this case not the state that formally governs Barta'a (i.e. the PA) but the one that is the de-facto ruler of the borderland, Israel (see Galemba 2013). Otherwise, the state can -often at any moment- threaten to reinforce its sovereignty or invoke fear in the border community, often by raising the possibility of more effective border control (Galemba 2012; 2013; Andreas 2000; Coutin 2005). By so doing, making the physical border and the various illegal practices prevalent there suddenly 'hypervisible' when they are normally quite 'invisible' (Galemba 2013). A reminder

that the state is rarely a passive actor without any oversight, but rather selectively withdraws or reinserts its authority to ensure the appropriate balance of costs and benefits are met. While the 'licitness' of practices at the border can be overridden by their 'illegality', thus always allowing a space for heightened state intervention (Ibid., p.279).

The willingness of the state to enable ongoing (il) licit practices at their border must, therefore, be framed within the context of benefits available to the border community, but importantly, also to the state itself –in this case not in reference to the PA but the Israeli authorities who have preeminent control. Scholars have highlighted that illegal transborder trade facilitates, for example, the ability to detract from the lack of economic opportunities by creating local employment, a mechanism for corrupt officials to extract bribes, or even for officials to access more funds to tackle the very problems they choose not to effectively regulate (Andreas 1999; Galemba 2012; see also MacGaffey 1991; Donnan and Wilson 1999). Border communities in general, and those engaged in transborder trade in particular, have been noted for their ability -at times of conflict between their respective states- to allow commercial interest to supersede any potential hostilities they might have with their cross border counterparts. In De Waal's study of traders in the hostile Armenia-Azerbaijan border such a dynamic was aptly summarised by the comment of an Azerbaijani trader who was doing business with an Armenian: "they fight, we don't" (2013, p.279; see also Nordstrom 2007).

It is these latter notions that are particularly key when considering the near perennial state of uncertainty that Israel imposes upon Palestinians in Barta'a as it encourages local practices that ensure maximum profit and the ongoing viability of the market. This often means traders taking quite short term business decisions, but more importantly, encouraging an environment that does not draw attention to Barta'a as a risk to Israel's security. This does not just refer to, for example, avoiding political resistance or protests in the village, but also ensuring the safety of the thousands of Jewish consumers that visit the market. I did not hear of one incident when a Jewish Israeli was in danger, let alone attacked. For traders, it is important that Jewish Israeli's feel that Barta'a is a "safe place" (Field notes, June 2018).

The Israeli security services are -to a large extent- already able to control this due to their preeminent oversight over the approval of permits to allow access to Barta'a (see Berda 2017). For example, it is near impossible for a trader to receive a Barta'a permit if he has a troubled record – such as a 'star(s)' on their ID.⁸⁵ After all, a Barta'a permit, carries the very real potential of allowing that Palestinian to -illegally- enter Israel. A similar degree of scrutiny can be found in other Seam Zone areas where Palestinians require access.⁸⁶ What matters when applying for a Barta'a permit is that “your behaviour is good”, which naturally limits the extent to which Palestinians considered a risk will be approved (Field notes, March 2019). This logic was also presented in the previous chapter with reference to Hebronite traders who were 'privileged' by their access to a BMC card while others struggled to get basic work permits to find employment in Israel.

Once in Barta'a, a trader's awareness to ensure stability is a hope to avoid -or at least delay- any decision by Israel to clampdown upon their economic activities. That is not to say that traders are not politically conscious, but it does not serve their interests if this political consciousness tangibly manifests in Barta'a. This means focusing principally on their purpose for being in the village, which is trade:

This place just for work and doing business - no problems here. I come here to do business - if someone wants to do something else or cause problems they can go somewhere else. (Mohamad Hamarshe, May 2018)

I particularly encountered this when I sought to explore the extent to which traders felt the term 'occupation' was applicable to their daily lives and how they did business. The term is omnipresent throughout all of my other case study interviews in the West Bank but I felt that in Barta'a I had come across it less. The heightened political tensions during the time of my field work, again, provided a valuable and timely opportunity to gauge the perspectives of Barta'a traders as

⁸⁵ A 'star' on a Palestinian's ID is indicative of a negative record on their 'file' as deemed by the Israeli authorities. A 'star' is therefore highly problematic for a Palestinian seeking a permit to work in Israel or cross into the Seam Zone. I met a Palestinian from Jenin who was no longer able to get a work permit for Barta'a as he had two 'stars' on his ID after being caught in Israel without a permit; an ID can have a maximum of three stars.

⁸⁶ See Hareuveni et al. (2012, p.31-34) for a list of the types of permits required to access the Seam Zone.

Mohamad went on to say:

There (West Bank) the life is about the ministries, PA, government... The life there is politics. The life here is business. (May 2018).

At the same time, traders must be aware of the sensitivities of those that they employ and, therefore, put forward for permits. Though interestingly, as many Barta'a traders do not use their full quota of staff permits they will often sell their spare allocation. For example, a Palestinian seeking opportunities as a labourer in Israel might pay about NIS 2000 to a Barta'a trader for a three month shop worker permit. But, as the trader is liable to the permits they sell they will, in general, only do this for someone they trust -such as a family member or a friend- which in turn further helps to regulate the Palestinians that enter Barta'a (and potentially onward to Israel) thereby avoiding any repercussions back in Barta'a. In this way, while traders are willing to support certain Palestinians to pursue economic gain, they are, nevertheless, policing fellow Palestinians that enter the village, to ensure that their own commercial interests are not affected (see also Abu-Zahra and Kay 2013). As Hamarshe is one of the largest shops in Barta'a the brothers have potentially one of the largest allocations for permits, but Ali reaffirmed the need to be cautious when engaging in such activity:

If I give this to someone who causes me trouble I will go to the municipality and get them to cancel the permit. I don't want this problem. (Ali Hamarshe, May 2019).

This perspective is intricately tied to the heightened economic rewards from doing business in Barta'a compared to their West Bank counterparts. The risk of jeopardising such an important source of income strongly encourages the form of self-regulation that Israel is able to rely upon in Barta'a. Simultaneously, these traders are also beholden to a much wider community of West Bank Palestinians that are dependent on their economic activity in Barta'a. With about 7000 West Bank trade related workers in Barta'a, a conservative estimate is that each might support a further five Palestinians and so up to 35,000 West Bankers.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ It is estimated that the average dependency ration in Palestine is 6:1, 7:1 in Gaza and 5:1 in the West Bank (UNCTAD 2017, p.13).

For traders in Barta'a the carrot is, therefore, the flexibility to pursue the profitable and (il) licit practices characteristic of GFB, but the stick could be any combination of the swift rescinding of a permit, the closing of Reihan or building a wall in the Wadi. But importantly, in the case of Barta'a, there is a stick wielded by an additional party who enacts a further layer of governance that dictates the behaviour of the traders, the local Kabha. A border community that on one hand, has formed its own particular control over the borderland space in the absence of PA authority while, concurrently, aiding Israel's necessity to keep the village "silent" due to the commercial benefits that the community itself derives from its particular borderland status.

4.2. WHO RULES BARTA'A?

There are two rules in Barta'a: the rule of the checkpoint, and rule of the family. (Field notes, May 2019).

Scholars have explored both the role and fate of different actors that exist and operate along the world's various borders. Notable contributions include those by Martinez who sought to develop a typology of borderland communities and their particular environment so as to facilitate both regional and global comparison; as with much borderland research, his focus was on the US-Mexico border (1994; see also Alvarez 1995). From the perspective of transborder trade, smugglers and corrupt state officials have featured prominently as key influencers in mediating GFB type activity (Flynn 1997; Nordstrom 2007; Endres 2014).

The agency of the broader border community or 'borderlanders' has, however, often been overlooked. Yet, this community that must regularly navigate varying degrees of state "presence" uncommon to their fellow citizens away from the border have been observed for their role in governing the borderland (Galemba 2012). An exemplary case is Flynn's study of the communities on the Nigeria-Benin border where she noted a heightened form of solidarity that not only resulted in a profound 'border identify', but contributed to a local sentiment that "this is our border" (1997); a notion that differentiates the concept of 'border' from its traditional geopolitical connotation, to one where "border" is defined as a social grouping of those with a locally determined claim to have authority over what

happens at the border. This perspective results in the border community feeling a right to oversee and profit from transborder trade by engaging in the smuggling of goods or mediation between non-local traders and corrupt customs officials.

As with similar cases, the comparative absence of the state in enforcing regular governance while also insufficiently supporting these communities, for example, through the provision of local services, is seen by these borderlanders as validation for their role as guardians of cross border trade (Flynn 1997). In Galamba's (2012) study of communities on the Mexico-Guatemala border, she too reminds of how though such borderlanders are afforded a degree of freedom to explore cultural, political and economic practices uncommon to non-border communities, nevertheless, they might also be subject to the worst forms of "exclusions and inequalities engendered by states" (2013, p.282). In this case, borderlanders feel entitled to levy additional taxes on traders that drive contraband goods through "their land" (Galamba 2012).

Border communities, therefore, pre-eminently reveal the tensions between that which the state deems 'illegal' but society, and the border community in particular, considers 'licit'. Specifically, as stated by Abraham and Schendel, the border is "where illegal flows are naturalized and intersect with the licit" (2005 p.29; see also Galamba 2013, p.276) as the state's unwillingness, or inability to, for example, provide alternative economic opportunities or state investment contribute towards the legitimisation of the illegal practices of borderlanders. These communities seek to exploit their 'border advantage' (Flynn 1997) by becoming beneficiaries of transborder trade, in the process, they also become integral to maintaining the conditions that allow for their profiteering.

Such conditions are evident in Barta'a and help to explain why the local Kabha community is able to see itself as both marginalised, and therefore entitled to invoke its own form of 'border identity' that validates its ability to operate both outside the purview of the PA, and in a manner that dictates how the village market is able to operate. This is not only due to the diminished role of the PA in Barta'a in general due to deterritorialisation, but also because of the PA's overall lack of credibility in the eyes of residents of the village – similarly to non-local traders as I commented on in *Section Two*. For example, in Barta'a there is no

hospital, transport authority or official policing. It is often stated that the only genuine authority the PA has in Barta'a is the provision of birth and death certificates (Raed Kabha, April 2018). Such "absence" of PA governance in Barta'a, be it intentional or by virtue of Israeli control, contributes to the borderland community disqualifying their government's right to control them (Field notes, May 2018). As with the non-local traders, local residents, too, buy into the notion expressed earlier by Ali Hamarshe that "we are the government".

This does not, however, mean that there is no oversight, for there is still an overriding necessity to keep the balance between security and profit. But, unlike other examples of borderland communities that are often quite free to impose locally determined conditions while still ultimately being beholden to the authority of their own state, the Kabha are principally responsive to a third party, Israel. As with similarly empowered border communities elsewhere, the Kabha is both co-opted and entrusted to ensure that collective benefits are maintained, but the overruling factor is Israeli interests of stability and "silence" in the village. By empowering the Kabha, Israel is effectively able to subcontract responsibilities that, as found in other studies of illegal transborder trade, can be both costly (such as enacting formal border control) and even dangerous (e.g., Galemba 2012). In Galemba's research the mere presence of state officials at sites controlled by border communities is a risk to their safety (Ibid.).

The Kabha, therefore, present an additional stakeholder in the Barta'a market, and so an appreciation of their interests provides a more comprehensive view into the political pacification witnessed in Barta'a more broadly. The members of this community, on the one hand -arguably- suffer more greatly than their West Bank counterparts as a result of the challenges linked to their geographical isolation. But on the other hand, they have adopted to the present reality to ensure they too can prosper by engaging in additional forms of (il) licit practice that are also a result of the deterritorialisation of Barta'a and Israel's flexible approach to regulating their activities. Even if, like the traders, it entails a degree of acquiescence to Israeli policy, because their benefits also derive from not contesting the status quo and avoiding instability to the village. I will expand on this in the following analysis and also consider other ways in which the local community can profit from non-local traders.

4.3. THE 'BORDERLANDER' FACTOR

The outsiders stay quiet because of the might of the Kabha. (Field notes, April 2019).

The influence of the Kabha was first outlined to me when I was told that in the absence of formal PA security control there is not one local policeman in the village. That is not to say that local crime does not occur but I did not witness any such incidents and by all accounts they are rare. Since the village was founded there has not been a single murder in Barta'a (Raed Kabha, April 2018). A phenomenon that is generally attributed to the self-regulating powers of the Kabha tribe which means local disputes are often settled without outside interference, neither the PA nor Israel. This adds a further form of pressure for non-local traders to respect local norms and not draw unwanted attention..

This dynamic was further highlighted to me when I asked traders about how well they felt the local Barta'a municipality catered to their needs. Traders routinely commented on, for example, the local service charges imposed on them such as the 100 NIS a month for rubbish collection or the fees to process permits. Yet, what surely amounted to millions of NIS making Barta'a one of, if not the, richest village councils in Palestine the traders could not see any tangible improvement in Barta'a in a way that facilitated their businesses. For example, the adequate repairing of roads or cleaning of streets.

It was, however, not for the traders to complain and they felt uneasy about being caught doing so. The cost of conflict with a Kabha, whether a municipal official or local community member, was not worth the risk of losing one's potential to do business in Barta'a. If traders were to challenge the governance of Barta'a or be part of any act that caused instability it was likely that they could face the backlash from the wider community, or worse, the threat of the Barta'a Municipality revoking their permit. Traders, therefore, generally kept to themselves while recognising that the local community was often unfairly profiting at their expense:

Don't see big problems here because you will go against all the Kabha family. (Field notes, April 2019).

An agreed set of practices to ensure the proliferation of (il) licit trade while maintaining a harmonious balance between non-local traders and the borderland community can be found in other case studies. Again, looking to Galamba's study of the Mexico-Guatemala border, the levying of taxes is not only considered "the law" that transborder traders know to respect, but these funds are deemed a legitimate source of revenue that can be invested in local community development (2012). While the requirement for non-local traders to hire the brokerage services of the border community on the Nigeria-Benin border is seen as given by all parties involved (Flynn 1997).



Figure 24 Rubbish on the main street at the end of the day

In Barta'a, non-local traders are particularly beholden to the Kabha as they are the de-facto guardians of permits due to the need for the local municipality to first approve all applications to do business in the village. The municipality, therefore, has a distinct level of control over which West Bankers can come in and who get to stay. This control is, however, not informed purely by a policy to ensure social harmony, but rather by the economic gains derived from the provision of permits. For every trader permit approved 800 NIS is given to the municipality. In 2016, it was estimated that around 7,700 permits were authorised. This would equate to approximately six million NIS (Ghassan Kabha, Mayor of Barta'a, July 2018).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Calculation made personally based on the numbers provided. It is, however, important to note that I was regularly informed that many more permits are likely

The permit business is, therefore, an integral interest of the municipality, but one that depends upon both an ongoing coordination with Israeli security services who provide final permit approval, and the continuing viability of the market place that drives the demand for permits by non-local traders. Both of which require Barta'a to remain a site of stability and of limited risk to Israel. And so it is that the local community both profits from Palestinian GFB in Barta'a, but is also able to regulate behaviour in the village:

But as traders we don't get too involved in this. We have our shops and we do good business and we leave that to them. It is only a few thousand shekels for us so whatever. But yes, it should be a lot better here. There is an 'unwritten rule' that we (zips mouth) don't speak this. If we speak this we might face a lot of trouble. Maybe we won't get a permit anymore. – When I asked a trader about how the Municipality is able to profit from them (Field notes, May 2018).

This dynamic is further demonstrated through a deeper exploration of the opportunities made available to Barta'a residents from the local trade economy. Although only a small percentage of the Barta'a market place consists of traders from the village, its residents have not been passive observers of Barta'a's economic growth. Many Barta'a residents have amassed great wealth while others have sought economic endeavours with disproportionate returns due to the particular market conditions presented to them. All with an active interest in maintaining the Barta'a market place because of the economic gain they both directly and indirectly derive from it. The unique position of Barta'a residents is aptly summarised by the statement below:

They make money without money. (Ali Hamarshe, April 2018).

This is evident at the moment one crosses the Reihan Checkpoint and confronts the lines of minivans at the end of the security tunnel leading away from the checkpoint. As few West Bank Palestinians have a permit to take their vehicles

approved without the knowledge of the Jenin Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It was beyond my research to explore this illegal form of permit procurement.

across the checkpoint to Barta'a and the PA transportation authorities are unable to provide formal services in the Seam Zone, Palestinians must rely on Barta'a residents to take them to the village. The vehicles and the drivers are not governed, and so having paid just 10 NIS from Jenin to the checkpoint for a twenty five minute journey, the three minute trip to Barta'a costs a disproportionate 5 NIS in an often overcrowded vehicle. On a given day a Barta'a driver might make the roundtrip trip twenty times, providing him with a revenue of around 700 NIS a day for driving a captive market of consumers. This equates to an approximate monthly income of 21,000 NIS, almost four times the minimum wage in Palestine (Field notes, June 2018).

The sustainability of such a job is of course dependent on demand. And though Barta'a residents also rely on this service to get to and from the checkpoint as part of their journey to the West Bank it is the daily influx of traders and labourers that sustain it at the profitable levels currently experienced. If the Barta'a trade economy were to demise or the Reihan checkpoint ceased to exist and the PA was allowed to regulate the provision of transportation to Barta'a, this profitable local transportation service would collapse.

The greatest profits are, however, made in Barta'a from the rental economy. The Barta'a market place has presented multiple Barta'a land and property owners the opportunity to earn millions of NIS per year. Rental can fall into different categories and is broadly, though not limited to, shop space (including storage and warehouses etc.) and accommodation that caters to the many traders, their staff and migrant (often illegal) labourers. The main opportunity for shop space rental is, unsurprisingly, along the main market street. Traders I interviewed were paying around 15,000-20,000 NIS a year for the smallest shops, but more often 30-50K NIS for a more regular sized outlet (Field notes, June 2018).

One reason why it is lucrative is that unlike in the West Bank where rental contracts are fixed, this law is not implemented in Barta'a. A further case of the effect of deterritorialisation from PA governance. This means that many traders face routine changes in their rents and could be removed from their property with little warning or legal recourse. One Hebron trader who arrived in Barta'a during the Second Intifada traced his different rents over the last sixteen years:

I came to Barta'a in 2001 and paid 18K NIS, then 24k, then 30K after about a year, then 36k, 40k, 42.5k and now they want 50k. This happens many times in Barta'a (April 2019).

It is important to note that only a small number of landlords are recipients of the largest economic gains. Most clusters of shops are under the same landowner and the ownership of all the shops in the high street are in the hands of possibly just half a dozen Barta'a residents. One trader estimated that his landlord likely made up to 3 millions NIS a year from the approximately two hundred shops located on his land. Even if on a smaller scale, those with any property in the vicinity of the market will likely rent it for either a shop or some storage space. This has resulted in the resident population of Barta'a steadily moving further up the hill and away from the high street. The financial returns are sizeable, one Barta'a resident related how his grandfather received just 3,000 NIS a month in pension, yet earned 60,000 NIS in rental fees (Field notes, June 2018). A prevailing sentiment is unsurprisingly:

If the market is disturbed a lot of people will lose. (Field notes, May 2018).

There is no information on the economic value of the rental economy as the vast majority of it is run informally; a situation that both residents and the municipality would prefer to keep so as to avoid regulation and the risk of less profit. Though the Mayor of Barta'a estimated to me that if the approximately 2000 shops paid around 20,000 NIS a year (likely a gross underestimate), it would amount to 40 millions NIS (July 2018). When I asked if he could also estimate the least regulated rental sector -accommodation- he stated:

I don't know and I don't want to know. But many millions. (Ibid.).

The sizeable economic gains available to the local community, be it through day to day transactions for transportation services or rental deals that add into the millions of NIS, show that the value of the Barta'a GFB economy emanates far beyond just the traders. This is important because it shows the multi-layered stakeholders that depend upon the ongoing functioning of the Barta'a market for often quite lucrative economic gain. It is not in the interest of any of these actors

to undermine the opportunities that Barta'a presents, and so in unison, they do not seek to challenge the status quo by making the village a site of instability and a perceived risk to Israeli security. By so doing they can keep the Israeli presence in Barta'a comparatively invisible while the Kabha community can remain informally subcontracted by Israel to ensure collective benefits are maintained.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION

In many ways choosing Barta'a as an example to highlight Palestinian GFB could be seen as misleading as it is unquestionably an 'extreme' case in the West Bank. Nevertheless, to truly gauge the extent to which formal and informal Israeli occupation policy dictates the fate of Palestinian economic development it is necessary to go to the fringes of the Palestinian trade economy, in this case the geographic borderlands. The case of Barta'a is insightful as it emphasises the myriad of visible and invisible social, economic and political 'borders' that Israel controls, in a process that deterritorialises swathes of land that should be governed by the PA, both now and as part of a future Palestinian state. The resultant layers of both conflicting and complementary 'regulatory authorities' allowing for the prevalence of (il) licit practices characteristic of a GFB economy (Schendel and Abraham 2005). The deterritorialisation of Barta'a highlights the extent to which Israel is able to fracture any supposed sovereignty of the PA - akin to Veracini's proposition of Non-Diplomatic Transfer- while rendering a notable population of Palestinians de-facto ungoverned as part of its broader settler colonial strategy (2010, p.44-5).

The story of deterritorialisation in Barta'a is actually -at least in the first instance- about entrepreneurship through economic endeavour. It shows how Palestinians, specifically traders, have actively and successfully identified and exploited the often dire conditions around them to pursue commercial gain in the Safe Zone of economic development - notably bolstered by a steady supply of Chinese goods that underpin their activities. These traders arrived in Barta'a across different phases, each time facing different opportunities and challenges, but consistently seeking the lucrative rewards of selling to a more sustainable and higher income Israeli consumer base that seeks to exploit the cheaper prices and wider range of goods that can be found in the Barta'a market.

Yet, the economic rewards of traders in Barta'a do not just come from access to such consumers, but rather, the particular conditions on the ground that enables them to operate comparatively unregulated due to the illegal, and officially temporary, Separation Wall that limits PA access to the village. This has resulted in a de facto 'free trade zone' where the formal registration of commerce is largely bypassed and the collection of necessary taxes is evaded. Importantly, the act of under or non-declaration is not limited to Barta'a but this practice is, nevertheless, heightened in the village as traders are more able to enact their disdain for financially supporting the PA. The absence of effective governance by the PA, in particular, legitimises a trader community to form its own parameters of (il) licit practices; similarly found in other sites of transborder trade worldwide (e.g., Flynn 1997; Neuwirth 2004; Galemba 2012). As a result, in Barta'a, a common sentiment amongst Palestinian actors is that "we are the government".

The case of Barta'a also shows that commercial gain is intrinsically tied to acquiescing to stability and limiting any sense of threat Israel might perceive from the village. Unlike the case of Hebron where I highlighted the varying socio-economic and political trajectories of different traders, in Barta'a I showed the need for an entire village to buy into this ethos; this included the non-local traders but also the Barta'a resident community, from the Municipality to minivan drivers, and landlords. These actors, often very politically conscious to the plight of their fellow Palestinians, nevertheless -to varying degrees- help to maintain Barta'a as a "silent village" not to risk the cessation of the comparative advantage for economic gain that they have carved out in comparison to many of their West Bank counterparts.

This form of individual and community regulation -enhanced by the omnipresent influence of the Kabha tribe and its particular 'border identity'- is an integral tool that the Israeli authorities are able to depend upon to ensure collective interests are met to maintain the right balance between security and profit (see Galemba 2013). In such a case Israel's is able to co-opt both traders and the local community with the prospect of economic gain in exchange for the regulation of behaviour through self-policing. While GFB activity can, again, be considered by Israel as a Safe Zone of economic development as it offers economic livelihood, without associated challenges against its settler colonial project.

In Barta'a Israel is also able to ensure such behaviour by offering a comparatively light touch approach towards its regulation of the (il) licit practices adopted by both the traders and the larger Barta'a community, in so doing, making its presence at the Green Line generally 'invisible'. While, simultaneously, it is in a position to -at any moment- enact its overriding authority by making the Green Line 'hypervisible' by, for example, entering Barta'a to affirm its overriding authority; this might include seeking illegal workers or threatening the construction of a physical barrier between East Barta'a and West Barta'a. Notwithstanding its preeminent control over access to and from the village, both in regards to the provision of permits, but also movement through the forever hypervisible and obtrusive Reihan checkpoint. This affirms scholarly attention that just because a state appears absent at the 'border' it is not a sufficient indication that it has no control or awareness of what transpires there, as the (il) licit practices that prevail are generally "hidden, but known" (Coutin 2005).

Unfortunately, the status quo that has so benefitted Palestinian's in Barta'a is not only a by-product of their political pacification towards Israel, but an asymmetrically enforced and controlled segregation -enacted most notably with the Separation Wall- and a process of deterritorialisation from PA governance. Those that gain from the Barta'a market are, therefore, simultaneously, caught in a position where political conflict and commercial profit come together (e.g., Nordstrom 2004; 2007; Andreas 2008). While it is difficult to resist against the 'borders' that are governed (and even physically constructed) by their coloniser as they form the very basis upon which these Palestinians are able to economically gain (see Donnan and Wilson 1999, p.88). As with those that benefit from similar transborder trade elsewhere, they legitimise their daily (il) licit practices due to the absence of comprehensive governing authority, yet their goal is never to fully resist or reject the state in its entirety (Ibid.).

This dynamic is, however, particularly troubling in a settler colonial context because as long as these conditions remain the traders of Barta'a will continue to have an avenue to economically prosper, but the political development of Palestine will remain challenged while Israel can further encroach on the sovereignty of the Palestinian people and the land of a potential future state. Few people in Barta'a believe that the village will ever return to full PA rule, a prospect

that would, at least, require unmitigated access across the checkpoint or the removal of the Separation Wall. This means that the alternative to the status quo is more likely some further form of colonisation of the land of Barta'a, and potentially also the people. But for now, how that looks, no Palestinian in Barta'a knows.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

At a time of heightened Chinese political and economic engagement in the Middle East, there is still an absence of tangible and impactful mediation by Beijing in the Israel-Palestine ‘peace process’. However, while the question of China’s potential ‘role’ has attracted the most attention, other facets of contemporary China-Palestine relations remain comparatively unexplored. This thesis has sought to fill that void by discussing China-Palestine trade as an alternative and nuanced dimension to China’s prevailing influence in Palestine. Specifically, how the importation and trade in Chinese goods plays a preeminent role in offering many Palestinians the opportunity for economic survival, or “to breathe”, in what I have termed the Safe Zone of Palestinian economic development that must operate under Israeli domination.

So it was that an investigation into the economic dimension of China-Palestine relations could only be understood within the overall framework of the Israel-Palestine ‘conflict’. In particular, the preeminent role of both formal and informal Israeli occupation policy in mediating the Palestinian trade sector in general and China-Palestine commerce in particular. This then called upon a holistic study of this trade, but not one anchored by misleading formal trade data and statistics, instead one dependent on the varied insights of those most engaged in the process. To do this required a ‘journey’ that took me across the world to key nodes of economic exchange from China, Israel to Palestine, but also one that needed me to navigate a range of scholarly paradigms of analysis to unpack narratives that were often hidden behind official trade data. This more ethnographically informed ‘bottom up’ methodology was characteristic of studies that are located in the field of ‘globalisation from below’ (GFB).

The value of adopting this inductive and interpretivist lead methodology was immediately apparent in the early phases of my research (*Chapter Two*) as I unearthed the range of informal and formal acts that contributed towards the under or non-declaration, and therefore invalidity, of China-Palestine trade data. Though these findings were insightful, their greater significance was how they called upon a need to better frame the practices of those engaged in globalised Palestinian trade, and an awareness of the wider political dynamics in which

these behaviours unfolded. This formed the foundation upon which the thesis's research questions were formed.

At first, I turned to the literature on GFB (*Chapter Three*) for explanatory power as to how one should appropriately contextualise economic practices that regularly blurred the lines between legal/illegal and licit/illicit; a matter further complicated by their varied interpretations in the different geographic locales that I studied. Schendel and Abraham's (2015) notion of (il) licit -formerly illegal but socially licit- provided the relevant framework to position the acts of the agents of GFB, but also to differentiate GFB from economic activity that might too be considered criminal because of its illegal nature, though deemed illicit by society. This distinction was key as it helped to locate GFB away from, for example, the world of drug smugglers or human traffickers, but towards individuals that were predominantly seeking the fruits of globalisation for their own economic gain, and even survival, often in the absence of viable alternatives.

It was soon apparent that this parallel system of economic exchange that existed from 'below', however, did not function in isolation from that in operation from 'above'. It was, therefore, unhelpful to fully untangle them, but rather to identify how and why their interdependence was so integral to both the global economy but also the local manifestations of GFB activity. The 'above', or 'globalisation from above' (GFA), had predominantly been considered as neoliberal capitalism that had been the principle economic and political ideology of recent decades. But, for this thesis, it was important to consider the 'above' beyond just economic globalisation but to the political conditions that were in operation and pre-eminently governed that which transpired 'below'. The 'above', I contended, was Zionist settler colonialism that guided both the formal and informal Israeli occupation policy over Palestinians.

The proposition of settler colonialism as an additional contextual framework (*Chapter Four*) opened up an array of possibilities to better interpret Palestinian GFB while also presenting an opportunity to uniquely develop the scholarly fields of both GFB and settler colonialism. Importantly, the adoption of settler colonialism meant looking at Palestinian GFB from a more holistic perspective, one in which its emergence was affiliated to a broader 'structure' and not just in

response to an isolated 'event'; it posed the important question of how one should interpret, for example, economic survival, when a Palestinian was faced by a settler colonial 'logic of elimination'. This provided the point of departure to more effectively approach this thesis's principle research questions. Which were:

1. How has formal and informal Israeli occupation policy shaped Palestinian import trade from China since 1994?
2. How has formal and informal Israeli occupation policy made space for the Palestinian trade economy?
3. What are the political implications of the Palestinian trade economy on Israel's occupation policy?

To answer question ONE and TWO I first needed to operationalise settler colonialism by identifying particular features that lead towards the rise and ongoing prevalence of Palestinian GFB. In particular, firstly, what contributed towards its demand and supply, and secondly, where (il) licit practices were most able to manifest. The former, I accredited with a policy of 'de-development' that undermined the capacity for Palestinians to explore more sustainable and productive economic sectors, leaving many dependent on the opportunities available in the world of GFB. The latter, I found explanatory power in the concept of 'deterritorialisation', whereby Israel mitigated the extent to which the PA was able to enact any credible governance in spaces over which it supposedly held jurisdiction. By so doing, enabling heightened forms of (il) licit activity to prevail in the shadows of PA rule.

The extent to which the rise of Palestinian GFB could be considered as part of an ongoing settler colonial 'structure' of elimination was brought to the fore as I found such economic activity to be considered as an important space for many Palestinians "to breathe" (*Chapter Five*). This was key to answering question ONE as it further alluded to a set of formal and informal strategies to create what I termed the Safe Zone of economic development available to many Palestinians seeking to survive under settler colonial domination. By drawing upon Israeli de-development policy I showed how GFB emerged as the Palestinian economy

struggled -and continues to struggle- to offer alternative and more effective forms of long-term economic development.

Yet to fully comprehend the Safe Zone was to see it as a double edged phenomenon whereby Palestinian engagement was ultimately governed by Israel. That is, it was only 'safe' for Palestinians to pursue the opportunities of GFB as long as Israel believed it was 'safe', or in its interest to allow it. Otherwise, Israel could at any time undermine the viability of this economy - as I showed in the case of the GFB consumer base. In so doing, providing Israel leverage to not only dictate the day to day practicalities of Palestinian GFB, but to hopefully coerce behaviours more favourable to ongoing Israeli control – particularly evidenced in the empirical chapters. This reinforced the notion that Israel was directly responsible for the rise, but also ongoing functioning of Palestinian GFB.

The validity of a 'bottom up' approach was to recognise that experiences were not homogenous while such a methodology enabled a far deeper exploration -in particular the socio-economic and political trajectories- of actors following their engagement in GFB activity (*Chapter Six and Seven*). It is here where the empirical chapters sought to answer questions TWO and THREE by providing not only unique examples of the effects of deterritorialisation on the creation of particular GFB market environments, but also how agents of GFB responded to Israel's need to keep it a Safe Zone and the broader political implications, such as Palestinian acquiesce or resistance to Israeli settler colonialism.

In the case of the former, it further highlighted how Palestinian GFB deviated from other scholarly studies where spaces of economic exchange and the actors involved were, at least in principle, within the confines of a sovereign state or an inter-state relational framework. Rather, the geographical divisions created in the city of Hebron and the de-facto yet unofficial 'borders' in place in Barta'a were far better understood as the result of structured deterritorialisation under Israeli settler colonialism. In particular, such deterritorialisation showed not only the preeminent role of Israel in creating these spaces, but its omnipresent pervasiveness in dictating the daily conditions on the ground as it undermined any credible form of PA governance. This invariably created unique examples of GFB market places while informing varying forms of local behaviour in response.

In the latter case, the more in depth analysis of Palestinians that benefited -both directly and indirectly- from GFB was an opportunity to both challenge and develop the study of those engaged in GFB worldwide. In particular, whether it was appropriate to principally frame agents of GFB as primarily driven by economic motives and comparatively removed from proactive efforts to defy the broader political dynamics that governed them. These were important considerations in a settler colonial context as the acts of these Palestinians would also point to the form of individual or collective resistance that existed against Israeli domination. Or more significantly, if their practices in fact bolstered Israel's control. The empirical findings showed that individual calculus had a range of options to adopt in the absence of a collective strategy of resistance.

I chose the city of Hebron (*Chapter Six*) as a 'diverse' case to present three quite disparate responses which, in general, manifested amongst business communities in different sites of economic exchange, this included: practices that on the one hand could be identified as inevitable coping strategies given the particular context traders found themselves in, to the perception of such acts as contradicting the conventional GFB framework of (il) licit, but rather considered (il) legal – formally legal yet socially licit. I highlighted this through the adoption of a privileged group of Palestinian traders in ownership of the Israeli bestowed Businessman Card (BMC) and how it contributed towards a façade of economic peace; traders who sought economic gain, and in some cases survival, in the sites least governed by both the PA and Israel. This group of "forgotten" Palestinians epitomised those that had been particularly let down by the absence of viable alternatives, and subsequently adopted different tools to benefit from the GFB economy while being rendered comparatively passive agents in resisting Israeli control; and finally, traders who presented a Palestine specific and unique contribution to GFB literature, as these merchants were a pivotal example of the convergence of GFB in a settler colonial context. Specifically, I showed how these traders, though invariably driven by commercial gain, were also informed by a broader logic of non-violent political resistance by remaining steadfast as merchants in a part of the city perennially under threat to further Israeli annexation. This act of Palestinian 'Sumud' (perseverance or steadfastness) highlighted the overlap between economic survival and political survival in the face of a logic of elimination.

The study of Barta'a (*Chapter Seven*) was selected as an 'extreme' case due to its particular geographic location and the subsequent conditions that manifested on the ground. It exemplified Palestinian GFB under the varied visible and invisible control mechanisms that Israel is able to enact on Palestinians. This not only included how Israel governed both the Separation Wall and the Green Line in a manner that enabled the emergence of the Barta'a market economy, but also how this control could be used to encourage individual and collective subservience to Israeli domination on the basis of uninterrupted economic gain. Interestingly, Israel was able to depend not only on non-local traders to self-regulate, but could also leverage the influence of the local village community who also benefitted from the market economy. The result was a collective effort to keep Barta'a a "silent village" and not a site of political resistance.

The two case studies showed both the persistent tension between commercial profit and political conflict, and acquiescence or resistance to Israeli control. This then highlighted some of the key contributions of this thesis as it emphasised the significant interplay between the 'above' and 'below'. But particularly, how the 'below' in a settler colonial context can play a role in either reinforcing or challenging the political status quo in a manner that could prove vital in the long term if Palestinians are to mitigate further Israeli domination and facilitate some form of Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination.

Unfortunately, it appeared that the preeminent necessity for economic gain and the absence of a collective strategy of resistance -that continues to this day- predominantly rendered GFB activity as a tool Israel could use to dictate the socio-economic and political trajectories of the Palestinians governed by its control. This may be the inevitable consequence as long as GFB type activity remains a principal avenue for many Palestinians "to breathe" as they seek a degree of socio-economic survival in the absence of viable alternatives.

These findings highlighted the value of the 'bottom up' journey that this thesis undertook. A thesis that soon discovered that any efforts to calculate the true value of Palestinian trade were futile, while the more relevant insights lay in the far deeper exploration into the origins of Palestine's particular trade environment and the broader socio-economic and political implications for Palestinians

residing under a settler colonial reality. I believe that both the methodological approach and the contextual framework adopted in this thesis are, therefore, integral to further studies on Palestine. Particularly because without “getting the tenses right” (i.e. settler colonialism), that which transpires in Palestine will continue to be understood using inappropriate analytical tools that simultaneously inform unsuitable steps for a just resolution (Veracini 2015, p.268). While relying on the data rich insights of the ‘below’ gives a much needed voice to those that are otherwise challenged by a logic of elimination.

Therefore while China’s trade with Palestine is very small within the perspective of overall Chinese international trade, this thesis showed its significant impact on the Palestinian economy and Palestinian society. With an understanding of how its trade is affecting Palestinian lives, China has a substantial opportunity to shape policies which are of direct benefit to the Palestinian population, but also ones that are appropriately contextualised to the settler colonial reality under which China-Palestine trade takes place. This may prove a more effective way of enhancing China’s image and role in the area, rather than focusing on the wider field of Arab-Israeli peacemaking.

FURTHER RESEARCH

In closing, it is important to highlight that the ‘journey’ -both physical and scholarly- could have taken numerous alternative paths that were beyond the remit of my study. The opportunities are somewhat endless, but those that I was regularly made aware of throughout my research included, but were not limited to:

Empirical case studies in other Palestinian locations: This is an obvious recommendation but one which is important because my case studies reflect only a ‘diverse’ case and an ‘extreme’ case. Additional case studies could include Palestinian cities and towns that are not fragmented as Hebron, or ones that are on the ‘border’ but not in the Seam Zone. A broader selection of case studies would also be useful in helping to established what might be considered a ‘typical’ case in Palestine

Empirical case studies in Israel: To see Palestine as a case of settler colonialism, is therefore to consider that which transpires in Israel as also an integral part of the broader 'structure' of ongoing Palestinian elimination. This means that GFB activity in Israel also plays a role in the broader socio-economic and political implications in the oPt. A particular line of study should be 'cross-border' commercial activity between Palestinians and the different subgroups in Israel, but also the communities within Israel. For example, what are the potential ramifications of GFB exchange between Jewish Israeli's and Palestinian citizens of Israel?

Alternative forms of GFB trading models: Here I am primarily thinking of a chapter that I was unable to include: a study on Palestinian e-commerce. This sector was experiencing rapid growth during my research while the opportunities and challenges for those engaged were reflective of the experiences of more conventional trade discussed in this thesis. In an increasingly digitalized market economy how this might manifest in Palestine could provide interesting insights into alternative models of economic development.

Contextual and Theoretical Framing: As is typical of a study from 'below' the appropriate framing and tools of analysis evolve with the accumulation of data; this can leave limited time to fully unpack and apply different theoretical considerations. I would like to have spent more time developing the scholarly notions of resistance, acquiescence and collaboration. And while Palestinian GFB provided an interesting contrast to other studies of GFB due to the role of settler colonialism, it would have been useful to further explore the fields of state 'sovereignty' and 'conflict' to reinforce the uniqueness of this case study.

Adopting data from 'above': As much as a study from 'below' seeks not to depend on formal trade statistics, this is also reflective of my inadequacy in techniques that might have been used to generate insightful data. Throughout my research I came across different methodologies in economic modelling and quantitative data analysis. I stand by the importance of at least paralleling such data with the form of ethnographic findings I produced, nevertheless, such statistics might have provided additional considerations to guide my research.

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