

# **The London School of Economics and Political Science**

IN SUSPENSION: THE DENIAL OF THE RIGHT TO THE CITY FOR  
PALESTINIANS IN ISRAEL AND ITS EFFECTS ON THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC,  
CULTURAL AND POLITICAL FORMATION – THE CASE OF UMM AL-FAHEM



Figure 1: Research site, Umm al-Fahem 2009, Israel

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## **Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is concerned with the absence of substantive, functioning Palestinian cities, and of Palestinian urbanisation and urbanism in Israel. Framed and guided by conceptions of the city and public space, their potentialities, the possibilities they allow, and the challenges they pose to the state, the thesis using Umm al-Fahem as a case study seeks to investigate the Palestinian city in Israel, its materiality, the semiotics of its public space and socio-spatiality, and to deconstruct the historical, structural, political and social forces that shape its (un)making. Employing mixed qualitative methods of ethnography, photography, archival research, historical, sociological and discourse analysis, the thesis questions and deconstructs the nominal status of the city of Umm al-Fahem, the first Palestinian village to earn the official status of a city in Israel. It considers how to conceptualise Palestinian cities inside Israel and aims to give answers to questions such as: what can be made of Palestinian cities inside Israel? What kind of spatial configurations and arrangements are being formed and why? What kind of socio-political and cultural order is being formed and why? How does the city respond under (post)colonial conditions? Can there be a functioning Palestinian city and a fulfilment of the right to the city under (post)colonial conditions? Umm al-Fahem, the subject and object of research, suggests that the process unfolding is one of absenting the Palestinian city, depriving Palestinian citizens of the right to the city, and producing domesticated, suspended, fragmented city and citizens. The production and mastery of space is used as a technology of control to achieve this, and forms part of a governmentality project whose underlying objective is the management of Palestinians.

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**Part I**  
**Introduction, methods & theory**

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Nominal, liminal: urbanisation under siege - the case of Umm al-Fahem<sup>1</sup>

A city is composed of different men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence.

Aristotle, *The Politics* (Quoted in Sennett 1994: 13)

Umm al-Fahem is a hamlet...cities you find in Jewish areas...**it is a city which exists on paper** only... it has no order...Jewish cities have parks...here people cut their trees to make room for parking....

Rida, Umm al-Fahem, 28 June 2009<sup>2</sup>

Umm al-Fahem is not fit to be a city at all. It does not have the basic ingredients of a modern city because of racist planning policies. Where are the facilities in the city?! It may fulfil some of the criteria of a city, such as population size, but where are the facilities?! The streets?!...It is one big refugee camp. It does not provide work for the bulk of its work force. Workers still have to leave the city at the crack of dawn to travel 80km and sometimes up to 300km each way to go to work...all in search of making a living. A city would have a museum, a market, work opportunities, theatres, leisure facilities, parks, playgrounds ... We have not got any of that ... just restaurants and coffee shops ... it is frustrating to compare it to other cities ... **we belong to the world of being...not doing.**

Hussain, Umm al-Fahem, 17 August 2009

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<sup>1</sup> Umm al-Fahem has numerous English transliterations. These include the following variations: Umm al-Fahm, Umm al Fahm, Umm el-Fahem, Um al-Fahm, Um el Fahm.

<sup>2</sup> Rida used to work as a construction worker in Tel Aviv.

Umm al-Fahem, in terms of urbanism and urban centres, is not a city. It is one big refugee camp. It is inadequate to be a city ... [it has] no industrial zone, no streets names<sup>3</sup>... we lack all the normal facilities of a city ... there is no planning in Umm al-Fahem ...[it has] **nothing of a city but its name ... it is a pile of stones** ... no parking...no order ... no master plan ... we have not got cities in the modern sense of the word.

Raja, Umm al-Fahem, 12 August 2009

In 1985, after leading a political battle with the Ministry of Interior and within parliamentary circles, Umm al-Fahem, then the largest village in Israel with a population of over 20,000, was the first Palestinian locality to earn the official legal status of a city after meeting the required population threshold. For years, however, its local government has suffered from persistent under-budgeting, which rendered it almost completely dysfunctional in delivering public services and kept it in a perpetual state of debt.<sup>4</sup> The city's materiality was severely affected. It was left with inadequate urban infrastructure, no public sanitation, poor educational and health services, no organised public transport, or adequate public spaces. Sewage flowed in the streets, and the roads were in dire condition. The city had no playgrounds or green parks and limited or non-existent work opportunities.

Demographically, the city was growing fast, mostly due to natural reproduction rather than in-immigration. Despite this, its imposed spatial boundaries remained almost constant, after its residents were dispossessed of their land in 1948. The refusal of the

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<sup>3</sup> The local government did in recent years name some of the streets in the city. The names, however, have not taken root in the residents' consciousness. Locals identify the streets mostly by vernacular landmarks, such as a local mosque, a local store or family households. Navigation in the city is therefore personalised.

<sup>4</sup> The concepts of local government, local authority, local council and municipality are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

planning authorities to approve an up-to-date master plan meant that no industrial or commercial zones were provided, and growing numbers of unauthorised buildings, officially referred to as “illegal construction,” were being built and therefore under threat of demolition.<sup>5</sup>

The lack of industrial zones and job opportunities drove the bulk of Umm al-Fahem’s workforce to go outside the city in search of a living. Therefore, the city could hardly attract outsiders to come and reside in it, a process which is indispensable to urbanisation, the heteroisation of the social fabric, and the making of a city. In the words of Hashim Mahameed, the mayor of the city in the 1980s, Umm al-Fahem was a city on wheels. “At four in the morning, the entire city is on the move, on wheels. All of them go to work in Jewish towns, as the city has no industries, no local factories. They go out of it, heading to wherever they can get few pennies,” said Mahameed in an interview with Uzi Mahnaimi of *Yediot Ahronot* in October 1988 (Mahnaimi 1988). The lack of work opportunities persists to this day, 29 years after Umm al-Fahem was declared a city. Its social fabric is mostly homogenous, and the majority of its working male residents are still manual workers in Jewish cities and towns. Many of them work in construction, hotels, restaurants, bakeries and maintenance jobs.

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<sup>5</sup> For more details on the issue of master plans and house demolition, see chapter 6 on planning.

The proletarianisation of Umm al-Fahem dates back to the Nakba of 1948.<sup>6</sup> Before the establishment of Israel in 1948, Umm al-Fahem was one of the biggest Palestinian villages, in terms of land and agriculture. Out of its 149,000 dunums before the Nakba, the village was left with only 22,500 dunums after '48.<sup>7</sup> Forcibly separated from the majority of their land, Fahmawis, whose village became a sanctuary for Palestinian refugees fleeing their villages during the war, had to face up to the new socio-economic, spatial and political order.<sup>8</sup> Offering a pool of cheap wage labour for Israel, they became its hewers of wood and drawers of water. Working out of the village/city during the day and coming back to sleep in it in the evening, Umm al-Fahem became a dormitory settlement for its workforce.<sup>9</sup> Hence the host of names which became synonymous with the city: a hotel city, a hostel city, a workers' city, one big refugee camp.<sup>10</sup>

Despite, and perhaps because of, such challenging socio-economic, political and spatial conditions, Umm al-Fahem up until the late 1980s was buzzing with leftist, nationalist and communist politics. Following its annexation to Israel in 1949, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Nakba, as often transliterated into English, means catastrophe in Arabic. It is the term Palestinians use to refer to the war of 1948 that brought the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns and the establishment of Israel. The chapter uses 1948 and '48 interchangeably.

<sup>7</sup> The figures vary between what local historians record and those provided by the British Mandate Statistics. Ighbariyih (1988: 17) along with research interviewees and newspaper articles on the city account that the village owned 148,000 dunums, most of which were in the Jezreel Valley, bordering Afula to the North, Jenin to the East, and Arah to the South. *The British Book of Statistics* (1945) figures are: 77,242 dunums, 8,838 of which were public. Dunum in Arabic, dunam in Hebrew, is a measure of land area used in some parts of the former Ottoman Empire. In Palestine and Israel a dunum equals 1000 square meters.

<sup>8</sup> Fahmawis is another term for the residents of Umm al-Fahem. The term will be used throughout the thesis.

<sup>9</sup> The slash between village and city signifies the transition in status from village to city. It indicates that the transition has occurred relatively recently as socio-economic and spatial conditions remained almost persistent even after the transition.

<sup>10</sup> These different descriptions were used by many of the research interviewees in reference to their city.

imposition of a military government in the Palestinian areas within Israel (1948-1966), the communists in the then village organised, mobilised and spearheaded the fight against the oppressive regime, and demanded that their basic rights were met. Defying repressive regulations, intimidation and criminalisation of political activism, the communists and their supporters organised demonstrations outside the military governor's house in the village, demanding bread, work and an end to military rule.

Their activism created the climate for other political movements to emerge.<sup>11</sup> Umm al-Fahem, then a stronghold of communists, became home of renowned, even leading, Palestinian political movements. These included the *Al-Ard* movement (the land), which was outlawed in the 1960s, the secular nationalist and left wing movement *Abnaa el-Balad* (Sons of the Land), and the popular Islamic Movement.<sup>12</sup> Locally, those forces challenged tribal collaborative politics, cronyism and nepotism, which were encouraged by the state as they were highly compatible with Zionist policies of controlling its subjects and pitting them against each other.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This is not to argue that other factors did not contribute to the emergence of new movements in Umm al-Fahem. In terms of the international and regional context, the 1950s, 60s and 70s were particularly politically interesting times in the Middle East and worldwide. This was the era of decolonisation, liberation movements, Arab nationalism, Nasserism, and the emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Palestinian resistance as an organised political force.

<sup>12</sup> Although *Al-Arad* movement did not emerge in Umm al-Fahem, it had a strong base there. In 1969 Fahmawi members of the outlawed movement initiated *Abnaa el-Balad*. At the time, *Abnaa el-Balad* was made of a majority of young members and had a mixture of nationalist and leftist politics. The movement still exists to date. Despite its nationalist character, it does not have a problem with Jews as such. In fact, some of its members are Jews. The movement believes in a one state solution.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 5 for more detail on the workings of divide and rule in Umm al-Fahem, particularly during the era of the military government (1949-1966).

The politically active city, “the revolutionaries’ den,” as a local historian has immortalised it in a book with the same title,<sup>14</sup> or “mount of fire” as Palestinians refer to it, was targeted by both the state<sup>15</sup> and far-right racist Zionist parties.<sup>16</sup> Throughout its contemporary history, and particularly in the 1970s and 80s, Umm al-Fahem was known for its mass demonstrations against Israel’s continued occupation and colonisation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the 1982 war on Lebanon, the dispossession of Palestinians inside Israel of their lands, and other subjects pertaining to social and political justice. Its communist-led local government (mid 1970s-1989) did not isolate Umm al-Fahem’s problems from the wider context of the Palestinian cause or the right of Palestinians in Israel to a substantive equal citizenship.<sup>17</sup> It challenged the establishment and was vocal in demanding Palestinians’ rights.

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<sup>14</sup> *The Revolutionaries’ Den (Umm al-Fahem 1935-1936): Notes on National Struggle as Told by Muhammed Shraydih and Others* (1988), written by local historian Tayseer Ighbariyih, covers the history of Umm al-Fahem from the great Arab rebellion of 1935 against British rule and its support for the Zionist movement until 1965.

<sup>15</sup> The concept of the state is very strong in everyday life, especially amongst the Palestinians. For them, the different state apparatuses and ministries in charge of overseeing and implementing government policies are often referred to by the general term of “the state.” This is perhaps because of historical and political reasons to do with the relatively recent history of the establishment of the state of Israel and its very centralised character. In both official and colloquial references, Israel is referred to as the state of Israel. In the context of the thesis, the concepts and terms “the state”, “the government,” “the establishment” and Israel are used interchangeably.

<sup>16</sup> In 1984, Rabbi Kahana and his followers, whose openly racist party was later outlawed, tried to march into the city demanding it swore allegiance to the state. Kahana’s followers tried again to repeat the move in 2010 and 2011. Fahmawis resisted such moves. In 1984 a demonstration of over 20,000 was organised to drive Kahana out and other smaller ones were organised to fend off Marzel, one of Kahana’s main disciples in 2010 and 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Although throughout the thesis I refer to Umm al-Fahem’s local government from mid 1970s to 1989 as being led by communists, in actual reality, the communists formed part of an alliance called al-Jabha, or Hadash in Hebrew: the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality. Al-Jabha was formed as a party in 1977 by the Israeli Communist Party and included, as well as communists, other non-partisan groups and activists who were active at the time. These included the Black Panthers, academics and activists from the land day of 1976. For more details see <http://hadash.org.il/english/>.



Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's Prime Minister in the early 1980s, said in reference to the communists: "this plant has to be cut before it grows."<sup>18</sup>

Through the employment of a mixture of technologies, some of which could be qualified as slow violence, the state tried to isolate and weaken the communist-led local government.<sup>19</sup> The technologies included discriminatory budget allocation, rejection of master plans, and continued negligence of persisting socio-economic, land and spatial planning problems in the village/city.<sup>20</sup> Fahmawis, however, refusing to capitulate to the state's racist and discriminatory policies, organised annual voluntary work brigades. Under the communist local government these were internationalist and gender-mixed in character. They hosted Jewish and Palestinian volunteers from both sides of the Green Line and at times individuals from abroad as well.<sup>21</sup> Basic urban projects and maintenance work, such as paving roads, cleaning the

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<sup>18</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem 13 August 2009.

<sup>19</sup> The term slow violence is inspired by Rob Nixon's (2011) work: *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the poor*. In his book Nixon details what he means by slow violence and provides ample examples of it. The gist of the book is that unlike the spectacular, sensational, and immediate violence which attracts the instant attention of people and propels their activism, slow violence is not instantaneous. It is rather incremental, more gradual, attritional, more invisible and more out of sight. Despite its damaging and sometimes lethal effects, it is not viewed as violence at all. Climate change, deforestation, biomagnification, toxic drift and oil spills are amongst the things Nixon treat as slow violence. Just as spectacular violence, slow violence also has a social and political unjust base. It is exercised more against the exploited invisible poor, who are disempowered, underrepresented and taken advantage of, thus rendering them even more vulnerable. Poor in this context are not individuals, but people of the global south, or the oppressed people of the world, whose health and lives are perceived to worth less.

<sup>20</sup> Chapters 6 and 7 deal in detail on what could be considered attritional damaging effects which spatial planning and under-budgeting have had on the residents of Umm al-Fahem.

<sup>21</sup> The Green Line is the demarcated ceasefire line, which became the border between the West Bank, occupied by Israel in 1967, and Israel. It is called the 'Green Line' because of the "colour with which it was later printed on official Israeli maps" (Newman 1995: 8). It is worth noting that the border is not demarcated on the ground. Israel has continuously worked to blur it through the construction of settlements, roads, and other infrastructure. Palestinians from the West Bank however cannot cross the line without a permit from the Israeli authorities.

streets, painting schools and building safety walls were some of the projects they accomplished.

In the 1980s, the national government attack, however, became increasingly incapacitating. The mayor, Hashim Mahameed, felt this was deliberate. “The city was under siege,” he said.<sup>22</sup> The sustained budget deficiency rendered his administration incompetent and incapable of delivering basic services and paying salaries for the local government workers.<sup>23</sup> At numerous times, secondary school teachers went on strike which when put together reached the equivalent of an entire academic year.<sup>24</sup> The water supply to the city was also systematically cut off for days at a time, as the local government could not pay its debt to Mekorot, Israel’s national water company. “Being political was the harshest thing for the [Israeli] establishment ... they just wanted us to manage rubbish collection ... good management was waste management,” said Mahameed.<sup>25</sup>

### **1989: the turning point**

In 1989 Fahmawis tired of the severe inadequacy of urban services, with flowing sewage in the streets of their city symbolising the epitome of their harsh conditions, voted overwhelmingly for the Islamic Movement. This was a vote for change. Prior to

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<sup>22</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 13 August 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Mahameed, in the interview (ibid), acknowledged that under his tenure there was an element of mismanagement of local affairs and at times over-prioritisation of the national question over the everyday affairs of the city.

<sup>24</sup> In Israel, local governments are in charge of paying the salaries of secondary school teachers.

<sup>25</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 13 August 2009. His statement echoes what the former mayor of the occupied city of Ramallah, Karim Khalaf said in 1979 in response to a peace plan brokered by the United States and Egypt to give Palestinians in the West Bank a form of autonomy. Dismissing the plan, Khalaf said that Israel’s intention is to give Palestinians the “power to collect garbage and exterminate mosquitos” (Abrahams 1994: 73).

its victory, during a time characterised by increasingly crippled management and poor urban performance, the Islamic Movement managed to build a successful record in offering welfare and charitable services to the urban poor. These included nurseries, medical and drug addiction rehabilitation clinics, as well as relief services.<sup>26</sup> Emulating the communists and leftist forces in recognising residents' agency, the Movement also launched its annual Islamic voluntary work brigades.<sup>27</sup>

Possessing material resources combined with invigorated young leadership and fresh breath for change, the Islamic Movement, within a relatively short period, managed to implement public urban projects which its predecessors were unable to deliver. Its promising performance, leadership skills and competence were enhanced by state support. The Israeli government at the time, in contrast to its animosity towards the communist leadership, had a vested interest in empowering the Islamic Movement, whose prime priorities at the time were social and moral. As soon as the latter was elected, the state offered the local government relatively generous budgets, including writing off its debt.<sup>28</sup> A tamed Islamic Movement, concerned more with religious, social and moral issues than with Palestinian nationalism, seemed compatible with the state's interest in reducing its subjects to their faith and defining them along religious and ethnic lines.

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<sup>26</sup> *Abnaa el-Balad* had, despite its limited resources, also offered health and educational services. *Al-Hayat* (the life) clinic and *Al-Hadaf* (the goal) nursery both established in the 1980s are still functioning. See chapter 5 for more details.

<sup>27</sup> The Islamic Movement and the Movement are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

<sup>28</sup> For more details, including statistical figures, see chapter 7.

Adopting religion, which is already close to people's hearts and minds, as its ideology and presenting it as the panacea for all the ills of society, including mundane everyday life problems, combined with its successful performance in urban management and regeneration, and relatively strong economic base, won the Movement the residents' trust, including from those who were/are not its affiliates. Twenty-Five years after it was first elected, the Movement still enjoys the trust of the majority of the city's residents. It has been repeatedly voted in to lead the local government, thus establishing what seems to be an unchallengeable hegemonic rule.

As can be expected, Umm al-Fahem's cityscape and semiotics - its socio-spatial, cultural, economic and political landscape - have changed throughout the last 25 years. The biopolitical projects which the Movement embarked on in the domains of public health, urban infrastructure, economy, education, body politics and the building of a new society were congruous with its ideology.<sup>29</sup> They worked to Islamise different spheres of life, including the production of a new cultural and normative order and new subjectivities which are socially and spatially visible. Spatially, more than 20 mosques were built during this period.<sup>30</sup> Socially and culturally, the city became more conservative in some respects and more open and relaxed in others. More girls, for example, now complete secondary school education, and some make it to university.

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<sup>29</sup> See research argument section of the introduction chapter, and chapter 7 for details on what is meant by biopolitical projects.

<sup>30</sup> Before the Movement was elected, Umm al-Fahem had four mosques.

A prominent and important site where social, cultural and political change is asserted was and still is the female body. Cross-age campaigns were launched to encourage religious sartorial practices, which resulted in more women and young girls wearing the *hijab*. The Movement also worked towards accentuating the *halal/haram* binary. In its beginnings, it criticised, even banned existing cultural and traditional practices and attempted to introduce new ones, which corresponded more with its version of Islam. As can be expected, the Islamisation of the social, the spatial and the bodily politics was also reflected in a shift in cultural, political and colloquial references.

Economically, the city has more shops and stores, and in the last decade shopping malls and twenty-four-hour outlets have started to penetrate the local scene. Statistically, however, the city still ranked second from the bottom on the socio-economic nationwide ladder.<sup>31</sup> According to *Al-Itihad* (2009), as of November 2009 unemployment in the city was 32 per cent, when at the national level it was 8 per cent. It is still more of a consumerist city with very few job opportunities to offer.<sup>32</sup> Compared to the 1970s and 1980s, when the gap between the rich and the poor in the city was almost negligible, Umm al-Fahem of today is more polarised, with a tiny minority forming a rich elite and a majority of low-income households.

Politically, while left wing movements and forces have suffered enduring defeat, the Islamic Movement has gathered more support, thus establishing what this thesis calls

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<sup>31</sup> See (Statistical Abstract 2000: 55, Local Councils in Israel, 2006:90).

<sup>32</sup> In terms of education, in the year 2000 Umm al-Fahem had the largest average number of students per class in secondary schools, in the entire country (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS] 2000: 56). According to official statistic from 2006, only 6.6 per cent of the population managed to gain an academic degree (Local councils in Israel 2006).

biopolitical hegemony.<sup>33</sup> Religious events became more popular than the once widely attended nationalist and leftist public events. The once city of mass demonstrations and widely celebrated national commemorations such as those of Land Day<sup>34</sup> and anniversaries such as the First of May, international workers' day, has changed. Its public events have shrunk in size and some have changed in form altogether. The annual festival of "*Al-Aqasa* is in danger," inaugurated in 1996, has become one of the main public events in the city, attracting tens of thousands every year.<sup>35</sup>

The political change is not only limited to public events and the city's urban, social and cultural character. The atmosphere of diminishing citizenship has been accompanied by consumerist citizenship. Material values have started to replace values of social solidarity. For example, the once popular voluntary work brigades which were emblematic of social solidarity and citizens' agency have almost disappeared. In recent years, violence in the form of gunshots, murder and robbery, has become a major concern for both the local government and its residents.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the generation born in the 1980s onwards have been characterised by some Fahmawis, especially those with left and nationalist politics leanings, as the "lost generation" of the city. They are a generation born into the era of identity politics,

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<sup>33</sup> See chapter 7 for details on what is meant by biopolitical hegemony.

<sup>34</sup> Land Day is an annual commemoration day observed by the Palestinians, remembering the bloody events of 30 March 1976 when the Israeli army shot dead six Palestinian citizens from the Galilee. Palestinians were demonstrating against the government's announcement of land appropriation in the Galilee to build Jewish settlements and for security purposes.

<sup>35</sup> The annual festival of "*Al-Aqsa* is in danger" is the Islamic Movement's main public national event, held in the city. It attracts thousands of believers from across the country. The festival is in support of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem which the Movement says is in danger of collapse as a result of Israel's archaeological excavations that are taking place underneath it.

<sup>36</sup> This thesis does not argue that such changes, particularly in regard to increasing violence in the city and the shift towards a materialistic culture, are reducible to the rise of the Islamic Movement to power. International trends, particularly globalisation and neoliberalism, as well as the withdrawal of the state from fully fulfilling many of its duties towards the citizens are major contributors to this shift.

neoliberalism, individualism and the fetish of material wealth and possessions. Although such a shift is by no means reducible to the Islamic Movement, for Fahmawis 1989 was a turning point in the history of their city.<sup>37</sup>

This condensed introduction to the urban, political and social history of Umm al-Fahem, the research site, presents a complicated and multi-layered story to be disentangled and investigated. It generates urgent questions about what the right to the city under (post)colonial conditions means, as well as about the relationships between the urban and the political, the social and the spatial, the colonial state and the citizen, space and power, resilience and control, the nominal city and citizenship, the substantive city and citizenship, governmentality and domination, religious identities and control.<sup>38</sup> These questions will be explored throughout the thesis. In what follows, I give a brief background to the genesis of this project and its framing questions in an attempt to contextualise, conceptualise, analyse and understand the city of Umm al-Fahem.

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<sup>37</sup> The reference here is to the majority of the research interviewees.

<sup>38</sup> Postcoloniality in this context, indicated by the term postcolonial, is not a temporal concept and does not suggest what Shohat (2000) and others make of it, that is a linear periodization implying the end of colonialism, the ushering in of a new era and the closure of certain historical events or an end to the denial of people's agency and resistance. Rather, it is a paradigm that not only acknowledges the history of colonialism, the subordination of the colonised, and the existence of systems of oppression and coercive domination but also seeks to analyse it and investigates its effects and the configurations of power structures in the present (Young 2001, 2003 ; Hall 2001 [1996]). Postcoloniality allows for a better understanding of a transformed historical situation and the political and cultural complexities which have arisen in response to such change, which at times seem to blur and confuse existing binary oppositions of either-or situations and definitions of colonised versus colonisers. As Hall (2001: 247) argues, while the differences between colonising and colonised cultures remain profound, they never operated in a purely binary way. Postcoloniality is an analytical tool that helps account for some of the data that emerged from the field, the materiality and governmentality of the village/city and the conditions under which Fahmawis live.



## **Suspension as control: conceptualising the Palestinian city and the right to the city**

Place remains fundamental to the problems of membership in society.

Holston and Appadurai (1996:188)

Our condition reminds me of [Emile Habibi's novel] *Al-Mutasha'il, The Pessoptimist*, when in one of its episodes the main protagonist, Said, finds himself sitting on a pole; where he can neither sit properly nor descend.<sup>39</sup>

Muhammed, Umm al-Fahem, 12 July 2009

On the one level, I was concerned with the absence of functioning Palestinian cities, urbanisation and urbanism in Israel, as well as the changing character of Palestinian villages and towns in regard to their materiality and socio-economic, spatial and political characteristics. As indicated above, some indications of the absence of functioning urbanism in Umm al-Fahem and other Palestinian localities include the conspicuous paucity or complete lack of neutral public spaces, cultural centres, green parks, playgrounds, job opportunities and industrial and commercial zones. On another level, I was concerned with the increasing privatisation, atomisation, parochialism, identity/tribal politics and neoliberal articulations in Palestinians' everyday life, reflected in the increasing appetite for personal material wealth and consumerism. In an attempt to try to investigate these concerns I decided to embark on a research journey which did not have a definitive route and did not follow any single established tradition of scholarship on the Palestinians in Israel.

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<sup>39</sup> For Edward Said (1986: 26), Habibi's novel and Mahmoud Drawish's poem, *Identity Card*, are the "[t]wo great images [that] encapsulate our [Palestinians'] unresolved existence."

Initially interested in the (re)production and ordering of space under (post)colonial conditions and its manipulation in ways conducive to operating power structures and political objectives, I thought that investigating the absence of substantive functioning Palestinian cities and urbanism could be the way forward to address my concerns. My premise was that the city and public space - how they are organised, produced and reproduced - reflect the historical, socio-economic and political processes and developments which contribute to their (un)making. They offer analytical tools and provide an entry into untangling the relationship between the historical, the political, the economic, the social and the spatial. They reveal the nature of citizenship and visualise the limits and boundaries between those who belong and those who do not. The city and public space in this context expose the workings of the power structure: who decides what and who does what to whom.

Framed and guided by concepts and theories of the city and public space, their potentialities, the possibilities they allow, and the challenges they pose to the state, a number of meta-questions became necessary to raise and unpack, especially in a context where the state is colonial, space is contested, and the citizenship it offers is corrupted and racialised. If cities are civilisation and incubators of advanced culture and sites where people can be public and visible, creative and contesting, where human agency has the potential to be fulfilled, where social movements, subcultures and countercultures have the potential to emerge and become visible, where politics and collective forms of art flourish and prosper and where the substantive nature of democratic citizenship is tested and materialised; and if material public space is a prerequisite for the materialisation of public life and is both indicative and an indispensable component of the democratic nature of society; if urban life, as

Lefebvre (1996) argues, is an indicator and a gauge against which the development of society is measured and depriving people of the urban means depriving them of civilisation, the questions we must ask become: what can be made of Palestinian cities inside Israel? What kind of spatial configurations and arrangements are being formed and why? What kind of socio-political, economic and cultural order is being produced and why? And can there in fact be a functioning Palestinian city under (post)colonialism?

In an attempt to form an understanding of the Palestinian city and find answers to my concerns and the above-mentioned questions, my journey into the fieldwork started in the summer of 2009. Employing a mixed qualitative methodological approach, I gathered ethnographic, visual and archival data to capture the lived experience of the city and investigate the seemingly simple question of whether Umm al-Fahem indeed functions as a city. Umm al-Fahem, with a current population of about 50,000, was the first Palestinian village to earn the official status of a city, since Israel's establishment, and which until the late 1990s was the second largest administratively registered Palestinian city in Israel.<sup>40</sup> Twenty-four years have passed since Umm al-Fahem was declared a city in 1985, the question of whether this official transition has been substantive or remained merely nominal and cosmetic formed the departure point for my research.

I spent three intensive months in the city, meeting and interviewing random people in the streets and alleyways, shops, coffeeshops and the city's art gallery. I also

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<sup>40</sup> Nazareth and Shfa A'mir in the Galilee enjoyed the status of a city before the establishment of Israel.

conducted interviews with people from the local government's planning department and political leaders from the city, and took photographs of Umm al-Fahem's built environment and everyday life. This was followed by two-month worth of work at universities' archives in Israel and individual day trips into the city in 2010. I was interested in deconstructing the nominality and abstractionism of the city, the social and political factors involved in its (re)production, and exploring how the city responded to (post)colonial conditions.

Unravelling the complexities and multifaceted contexts of the simple question of whether Umm al-Fahem functions as a city required the development of a new conceptual framework. It also raised a host of other questions about the political status of Palestinians in Israel, the nature of their citizenship, the character of the state and its relationship to its Palestinian citizens. The project soon developed to be simultaneously in and of the city. Umm al-Fahem became simultaneously the subject and object of analysis. As the subject, it speaks through both its history and its residents about its experience, socio-spatiality, built environment, politics, economics and culture. At the same time, it remained the object of analysis as I tried to analyse the Palestinian city under (post)colonial conditions.

While in Umm al-Fahem, and during the months upon months of digesting, reflecting on, and analysing the wealth of material obtained from the field, as well as in the numerous and thought-provoking conversations with my supervisor, I realised that determining in a definitive way whether Umm al-Fahem functioned as a city had become virtually irrelevant. I became increasingly aware that the process taking place was in fact one of absencing the Palestinian city - the deliberate deprivation of the right to the city - which I also call urbicide, and the correspondent production of a

suspended, domesticated, docile and dependent space and a suspended, domesticated, docile, dependent citizenry.<sup>41</sup> I realised that part of the process was the production of a space which is ambiguous in its identity: neither a city nor a village, a space where its residents inhabit a state of uncertainty and precariousness, and where both the city/village and its residents live a simultaneous presence/absence state of being, where they are also deprived of self-fulfilment.

In this suspended space, the Palestinian city in Israel acquires particular forms and functions which are not compatible with those of functioning substantive cities. The city is more of a dormitory and consumption site. It is a concrete centre, cramped and crowded with buildings, with hardly any planned development, neutral spaces or green public spaces. Its green spaces are often either cemeteries or private domestic gardens, created when and if the private space and financial conditions allow.<sup>42</sup> Its public spaces are mostly limited to religious spaces such as mosques and churches, and recently to commercial spaces such as cafés, restaurants and shopping malls. The *use-value*, to borrow Lefebvre's terminology (1991), of this concrete urban jungle, which can easily become suffocating and claustrophobic, is in many cases reduced to serve the rudimentary functions of eating, sleeping, reproducing, worshipping and consuming.

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<sup>41</sup> For details on urbicide see the introduction's section on research arguments below.

<sup>42</sup> Many Palestinian cities and villages, Umm al-Fahem included, are surrounded by pine forests. These, however, are Jewish National Fund (JNF) forests. The JNF, a pre-state colonial body in charge of land purchase, defines land as the exclusive, inalienable property of the Jewish people. The forests have a number of political functions. They have been used as a tool for asserting Jewish control over land, covering up destroyed Palestinian villages, and preventing geographical continuity between Palestinian localities. See chapter 4 on Israel's colonial *nomos* for more detail on JNF's role in perpetuating the Manichaeism and exclusionary-exclusive nature of the state.

As for the Palestinians inside Israel, just like their cities and villages, they reside in a state of the betwixt and between, the state of simultaneous inclusion-exclusion, the state of the suspended dialectic of citizens and enemies. Despite being officially citizens of the state, they have been subject to systematic and institutionalised racism and discriminatory policies since the establishment of the state in 1948. The state still sees them as a problem to be managed, even as enemies rather than citizens. Their citizenship is more obscuring than revealing of their actual status, the way they live and the nature of rights they are able to claim effectively. Although they legally enjoy civil and individual rights, they are neither fully included in the state nor fully excluded.<sup>43</sup> Their citizenship has been hollowed of many political, economic, social and cultural rights, and faces an ever-increasing state of precariousness.<sup>44</sup> Precariousness and suspension permeate the most private and sacred aspects of their life: home and family. The unauthorised buildings, which are under threat of demolition by the state, and the 2003 Nationality and Entry into Israel Law-Temporary Order, which affect family unification and which broke families up and

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<sup>43</sup> On 22 March 2011, for example, the Knesset passed an amendment to the budgetary law which gives the Minister of Finance the power to employ punishment procedures by reducing budgets given to bodies that deny the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, commemorate the Nakba, or show contempt for the country's flag or symbols. For more details on the law see: *Book of Laws* 2286, 30.3.2011, pp 686-87 [Hebrew], available at: <http://www.knesset.gov.il/Laws/Data/law/2286/2286.pdf>. The "Nakba Law," as it is described by Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, leaves the term "bodies" ambiguous, and potentially pertains to all cultural and education institutions that receive budgets from the state.

<sup>44</sup> Amal Jamal (2007) in his article 'Nationalizing States and the Constitution of Hollow Citizenship', *Ethnopolitics*, volume: 6, Issue: 4, pp. 471-493, discusses in detail the process of what he calls hollow citizenship. Oren Yiftachel (2002) has described the attack on Palestinian rights in Israel, as a shrinking space of citizenship.

threatens the same for many more, are quintessential of the Palestinians' unresolved existence.<sup>45</sup>

Hence, the suspended space and the suspended citizen become a technology of domination and control. It is a mode of governmentality and a way of managing Palestinians which helps create the conditions for domestication and docility and perpetuate the state of dependency on Jewish cities and towns.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, suspension problematises the sense of belonging, accentuates the unresolved condition of being and deepens the state of uncertainty. It robs both the citizen and the city of the sense of security and stability, and frustrates creativity, vision and the ability to plan. It marks the limitation of Palestinians' right to the city, the right to difference, urbanity and substantive citizenship and the right to live without the burden of precariousness. Space under the state of suspension is not one of potentialities but constraints. Both space and the citizen are ruled and controlled by

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<sup>45</sup> The right to choose who to marry and who to build a family with, once thought to be a personal choice, is not the case with Palestinians. Falling in love has been politicised, securitised, racialised, collectivised, problematised and in some cases suspended. Legitimised by the international state of politics after the terror attacks of 11 September 2000 on World Trade Centre in the United States of America (U.S.A.), and the doctrine of the war on terror led by the latter and Britain (the two main allies of Israel), as manifested in draconian anti-terror legislations where curtailment of civil liberties seemed appropriate for counterterrorism, on 31 July 2003 the Knesset enacted the Nationality and Entry into Israel Law- Temporary Order, which bans the Palestinians from Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) from obtaining residency status or citizenship in Israel, including through marriage to an Israeli citizen. Not only does the law ban Israelis from marrying Palestinians from the OPTs, it is also retrospectively applied to couples who were married before the enactment of the law and have not yet received a residential status. By imposing the sweeping ban, the law severely violates fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in both international treaties to which Israel is party and those protected also under domestic law. The law that was initially presented as a temporary measure to stem the flow of Palestinian suicide bombers who allegedly entered Israel through the "gate" of family unification, has been extended repeatedly (Peled 2006: 32). In 2005, Adalah together with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel submitted a joint petition to the High Court of Justice contesting the factual base of the Law. Despite repeated claims that the law was designed to prevent suicide attacks, Israel, has only been able to point to a maximum of 25 individuals out of thousands of status receivers whom it questioned on suspicion of engagement in terror activity in the last preceding five years.

<sup>46</sup> The section on research arguments below details what the notion of governmentality means.



fear, the unknown, and lack of clarity. They are reduced to living in the moment, to taking a chance, all of which facilitates the condition for docility, domestication and fragmentation.

The state of suspension, which characterises the transition which both Palestinians and their localities have undergone, cannot be understood myopically. It cannot be divorced from the urban history of Palestinian cities before the Nakba of 1948. Therefore, before getting into the research arguments and its scholarly contribution, in what follows I give a brief historical background on the Palestinian city before and after 1948. Central to this history is the way Zionists related to the Palestinian city as a site of threatening politics and resistance, and as a site which could potentially bring Jews and Palestinians together as illustrated by the case of the Communist Party, an outcome which would be counterproductive to the exclusive-exclusionary Manichaeian essence of Zionism. Understanding the urban question in a historical context helps shed light on understanding the urban question after 1948 and its potential challenge to the colonial project of establishing and maintaining an exclusively Jewish state. It helps facilitate the grounds for the research arguments.

### **The rise and fall of Palestinian cities**

The tragedy of Palestine...is not the Nakba but the loss of its cities.

Tamari (2005: 96)

Jaffa's destruction, the city and the port, will certainly come, and for the better... If it goes down I will not lament it.

Ben-Gurion (1973 [1936]: 335)

Before the Nakba, the catastrophe of 1948, Palestinians had urban centres. In 1945, more than one-third of Palestinians lived in cities and towns (Benvenisti 2000: 6). At the turn of the twentieth century, the port cities of Jaffa and Haifa, for example, were undergoing fundamental socio-economic transformations and an accelerated process of urbanisation. Khalidi (1997:26) notes that the two cities were the fastest growing cities, which by 1948 had the largest Arab populations of any cities, and were the commercial, economic and cultural foci of Palestine. In Jaffa, for example, the principal trading city in Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine (Tamari 2005; Katz 1986), the population grew from 39,700 in 1904 to 50,000 in 1913 (Kark 2003 [1984]: 132).<sup>47</sup> The city, with Haifa joining at a later stage, became more integrated into global trade and commerce, a process which started under the Ottomans and intensified under the British Mandate.

The changes in the geopolitical map of the region, the discovery of petroleum in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, along with the post First-World-War partition of the Middle East between imperialist powers, Britain and France, played a pivotal role in the socio-economic and political trajectories of Palestinian cities. Urbanisation, for example, which contributed to the formation of what Zureik (1978:52) and Tamari (2005) call a nascent and distinguishable Palestinian bourgeoisie and proletariat, got accelerated. Haifa, ‘the bride of the Carmel,’ like its compatriot city of Jaffa, on a different trajectory nonetheless, began to bustle with life, culture and employment opportunities. In less than ten years, Haifa’s Palestinian Arab population doubled, from 18,240 in 1922 to 34,148 in 1931, reaching 62,510 in 1944 (Anglo-American

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<sup>47</sup> A different source cites that Jaffa in 1904 had a population of 30,000. See (Kark 2003 [1984]: 132)

Committee of Inquiry on Jewish Problems in Palestine Europe 1946: 148 & 151).<sup>48</sup> Its geopolitical characteristics, being on the Mediterranean with deep-water shores, made it particularly important for British economic and political interests. Under British rule, the city was turned into an industrial centre which had a deep-water harbour, a railway; the Hijaz railway to Baghdad, an airport and the Mosul-Haifa oil pipelines which connected to the oil of Northern Iraq.<sup>49</sup> It was also in Haifa that Palestine Railways built their main repair and maintenance workshops and where an oil refinery began to function soon after the Second World War broke out (Lockman 1996: 85). “We miss and lament the days of Haifa,” said an old Palestinian woman who in early 1940s moved from her village to Haifa together with her husband for work.<sup>50</sup>

Inevitably, such socio-economic developments led to a demand for luxurious goods, such as the automobile and spaces for cultural and leisure activities, which were distinctively secular and urban in nature. Kark (2003 [1984]) notes that Jaffa at the time had theatres, cabarets, football clubs, coffeeshops, brothels, as well as 22 newspapers. Its cultural scene included cinemas, which attracted not only the local population but also those from neighbouring cities, such as Il-Lydd. The cinema was

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<sup>48</sup> To get to these numbers I added the Muslim population of the city to the Christian one. The British divided their census along religious lines. The category of Arab did not feature in the census.

<sup>49</sup> For more information about the oil pipe line, see Iraq Petroleum Company. (1934) *An Account of the Construction in the Years 1932 to 1934 of the Pipe-line of the Iraq Petroleum Company, Limited: From its Oilfield in the Vicinity of Kirkuk, Iraq, to the Mediterranean Ports of Haifa (Palestine) and Tripoli (Lebanon)*. (The construction of the Iraq-Mediterranean pipe-line: a tribute to the men who built it. October. 1934). London: St. Clements press.

<sup>50</sup> Najjiyih, born in the 1920s, remembered vividly her days in Haifa, and how the city was bustling with life, culture, cafes and musicians from Egypt and Lebanon playing there. Her husband, who is from the same village, was working in a canteen in a British Police station (interviewed in September 2010).

not a male dominated space. Women also enjoyed it. They even went there dressed up in their best and special occasions clothes.<sup>51</sup> Known as 'the bride of the sea,' Jaffa was also integrated into the regional cultural scene. It was not an isolated city. The Egyptian singer Umm-Kulthoom, renowned as the greatest Arab singer ever, had along with other famous Egyptian artists performed in Jaffa.

In those days, Jaffa was also known for its openness to difference and tolerance to the other. The city was cosmopolitan in its social fabric and outlook, with Muslim and Christian Palestinians, Jews, Armenians and others all residing in the same city. Tamari (2005: 16) notes that Ottoman Jaffa's urbanisation, like other port cities under their rule, was not only limited to traditional rural migration into the city, but included Europeans who worked in commerce and business.

Cities, however, were not only sites of employment, culture and leisure. They were spaces where politics, labour movements, class, feminist and national identities were being shaped. Parties and movements from across the political spectrum were formed. These included Islamists, nationalist and communist. Cities were also sites of resistance against the intensification of Zionist immigration to Palestine and the increasingly repressive British colonial rule with its favourable policies towards Zionism. Although as Khalidi (1997: 7) notes, the Palestinian peasantry was the first to realise the nature of Zionism as a colonial movement which sought to assert its rule in Palestine through land purchase from absentee landlords at the end of the

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<sup>51</sup> This is what one of my women interviewees from Il-Lydd, A'aqlah who is in her 70s, told me during my fieldwork in the summer of 2009. Remembering her days in Jaffa and the cultural life of the city, she told the story of her sister-in-law who in the 1940s was in her 20s and used to dress-up to go to the cinema in Jaffa with her brother.

nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was the urban intelligentsia which later played a crucial role in opposing the Zionists. The struggle of those peasants, who were driven off their farmland, was a wake up call to the urban intellectuals, who were not fully aware of the developments in inland Palestine.

Despite the increasing national tension between Zionists and Palestinians, in Haifa, which was rapidly becoming a mixed city of Jews and Arabs, other forms of relations between Palestinians and Jews, especially the anti-Zionists Jews, were being formed. Lockman (1996), in his book *Comrades and Enemies*, which investigates the relationship between Arab and Jewish workers in various work sites such as in the case of the railway men, reveals a story of comradeship at times and enmity at others. Their common interests as workers and their shared work conditions brought them together. This was despite being profoundly affected by the national and political environment, and despite the fact that workers did not repudiate either their respective cultural nor their emerging national identities. Such alliances, however, generated dismay and discontent amongst respective nationalist elites, especially the chauvinist Zionist trade union, the Histadrut.

In early 1920s, the Palestine Communist Party (PCP), which was at first entirely Jewish and later became mixed with Arab and Jews joining together until the party's disintegration in 1943, was militantly on the side of workers' rights and against the Zionist movement. Its efforts to win support amongst the Arab community were enhanced by a clearer anti-Zionist stance. In 1924 it set up *Haifa*, the Arabic biweekly newspaper. The PCP, even when it was Jewish, attacked the Zionist movement for displacing Palestinian peasants. For example, it organised and publicised a campaign in support of the latter's resistance to their displacement by the Jewish National Fund

(JNF), which bought their farmland in Afula, Jezreel Valley, from Arab landlords. The PCP had openly called “for an end to Jewish immigration to Palestine” and urged “Jewish workers to break with Zionism and seek a revolutionary alliance with the Arab workers and peasants” (ibid: 130).

The PCP activities and platform became increasingly alarming for the Histadrut, which feared its growing influence amongst Arab and Jewish workers. The Histadrut was particularly concerned about Jews who recently came from Eastern Europe and who were “hungry and desperate,” (ibid) at a time which was considered politically and economically vulnerable for the Zionist project. The fear resulted in a purging campaign against the communists in 1920s and led to their expulsion from the Histadrut in 1924 (ibid). Despite the PCP’s disintegration in 1943,<sup>52</sup> the experience as a joint party of Arabs and Jews united by a shared vision built on equality and the fight against oppression shows that other forms of coexistence were and are possible between Arabs and Jews. Such experience, where the city and the workspace form its home and where common interests bring people together, also shows that national chauvinism cannot tolerate organised voices which challenge its racialised exclusive-exclusionary agenda.

## **1948**

The Nakba of ’48 was a turning point. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 resulted in the destruction of Palestinian urban centres and the exile of their

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<sup>52</sup> As political circumstance both internationally and nationally changed, the PCP’s Jewish members changed their stance towards the Zionist project, moving towards supporting the establishment of Israel (Lockman 1996).

Palestinian urban population, including their nascent middle class. Jaffa, which by 1948 had a population of 80,000, was left with only 3,800 marginalised and excluded Palestinian inhabitants. Haifa's and Jaffa's fate epitomised a wider consequence of '48: the vanishing of the Palestinian city as a social, political, economic and cultural site, the amputation of Palestinian urbanisation, the exile of most of the urban Palestinian population, and the forcible conversion of major Palestinian urban centres into cities which became either predominately or entirely Jewish.

Tamari notes that the destruction of the Arab and cosmopolitan character of port cities, and the exile of their Palestinian Arab intelligentsia had devastating and far-reaching consequences on the development of the Palestinians who remained in the homeland. The urban infrastructure of daily newspapers, secular political parties and trade unions was completely destroyed, as so was their influence on inland Palestinians (Tamari 2005:45) who were more rural and more socially conservative. With the loss of major cities, Palestinians lost their centre of gravity. They became scattered, fragmented, even disappeared from the political map as an independent actor and as a people. This remained the case until the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation as political force in 1964 (Khalidi 1997:178-179).<sup>53</sup>

The destruction of Palestinian cities was not inevitable, but deliberate. Critical reading of Zionist literature and policies shows that the targeted destruction of urban centres had been part of Zionist designs well before 1948. Israel's founder and first Prime

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<sup>53</sup> The PLO emerged in exile. It was not allowed back into Palestine territories until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Minister, David Ben-Gurion (1973: 335), wrote in his memoirs in 1936: “Jaffa's destruction, the city and the port, will certainly come, and for the better... If it goes down I will not lament it.” After the establishment of Israel, Ben-Gurion admitted that, “[t]he strategic objective was to destroy the urban communities, which were the most organised and politically conscious” (quoted in Abrahams 1994: 86).

### **1948 onwards: urbanisation without urbanism and the right to the city**

We do not weep for the mill of the village but for the bookshop and the library. We do not want to regain the past but to regain the future and to push tomorrow into the day after. Palestine's progress in the natural paths of its future was deliberately impeded, as though Israel wished to make of the whole Palestinian community a countryside for the city of Israel. More than that, it plans to turn every Arab city into a rural hinterland for the Hebrew State.

Barghouti (2005: 149)

Palestinians after '48 were stripped of their right to the city, to culture, to diversity, to urbanity, full substantive citizenship, and to living without the burden of colonisation, occupation, fragmentation, discrimination and racism. The right to the city in this context is not only an individual right to reside in an urban space. It is rather one for a city of potency and opportunities, cosmopolitanism and openness, agency and struggles, culture and countercultures, heterogeneity and assemblage, production and employment, politics and citizenship, freedom and liberties, difference and tolerance, collectivity and individuality, art and creativity, public and unmediated spaces.



The right to city is the right to urbanity, in which the city forms its characteristic locus.<sup>54</sup> The city as a place of what the French sociologist, intellectual and philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1996: 179) calls “renewed centrality...of encounter and exchange...” It is the right to a city which transcends the individual liberty to access urban resources, as David Harvey argues (2008:23). It is “a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization” (ibid).

After the war of ‘48, less than 160,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom living in rural villages, remained in the newly established state of Israel. Those Palestinians found themselves living under a new geopolitical landscape. They became *de jure* Israeli citizens supposedly enjoying equal rights as their fellow Jewish citizens. Although they could vote and get elected for parliament, unlike Jewish citizens they were soon placed under a strict military colonial rule, which suspended their citizenship rights and fragmented their entire existence. The military rule (1948-1966) subjected them to a regime of pass permits, curfews, confined their spatial movements, dispossessed them of the majority of their land, underdeveloped their economy and at times criminalised the most basic of their rights, that is the right to cultivate their land or visit a family member who resided in a different village. Israel,

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<sup>54</sup> Louis Wirth (1938) in his article ‘Urbanism as a Way of Life,’ identifies the city to be the characteristic locus of urbanism. He, however, argues that urban mode of life is not necessarily confined to the city, an argument which was also echoed in some of my fieldwork interviews.

defining itself as a Jewish state,<sup>55</sup> isolated them from the rest of the Palestinian people, and had for long not only barred them from publicly expressing their Palestinian identity, but in fact criminalised and harassed those who did.<sup>56</sup>

With the exception of the Naqab (the Negev) where the state built townships to forcibly and coercively concentrate the desert's nomadic Bedouin population, Israel failed to build any new town or city for the Palestinians.<sup>57</sup> Instead, it has continuously confiscated their land and has denied some of them the right to live on their own land. Some 40,000 Palestinians live in what Israel defines as unrecognised villages, which puts them under a constant threat of eviction and the demolition of their corrugated iron huts and tents.<sup>58</sup> Despite their pre-state existence, Israel did not put their villages on its official maps, thus rendering them invisible and illegal residents on their own land. Not only does the state deprive them of the basics of rights: clean water, electricity, access to health and education, but also considers them invaders who need to be removed. "We must stop their illegal invasion into state land by all means

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<sup>55</sup> On the Jewish character of the state being enshrined in the Law, see: The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, dating back to 14 May 1948, [http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm), and amendment no. 9 to the Basic Law: Knesset, which stipulates that 'A candidates' list shall not participate in elections to the Knesset if its objects or actions, expressly or by implication, include... negation of the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people;...' [http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic2\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic2_eng.htm). In addition, in 2011 Member of Knesset Abraham Dichter put forward a bill for a basic law to define Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. For more details see Dichter Bill, at the Ministry of Justice website: <http://index.justice.gov.il/StateIdentity/ProposedBasicLaws/Pages/DichtersProposal.aspx> [Hebrew].

<sup>56</sup> For more information on political persecution and criminalisation of political activists see the section Everyday Coloniality, Everyday Manichaeism, in chapter 5 on Historical Sociology of Umm al-Fahem.

<sup>57</sup> For more details on the politically motivated sedentary policies towards the Bedouins of the Naqab see Falah, G. (1989) 'Israeli State Policy towards Bedouin Sedentarization in the Negev', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18:71–90. Also see Yiftachel, O. 2006 *Ethnocracy*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia.

<sup>58</sup> Al-A'araqeeb unrecognised village in the Naqab, until 16 June 2014, has been subjected to demolition for 71 times ('Another Brutal Attack on Al-A'araqeeb to Demolish it' (2014), available at: <http://www.aljabha.org/index.asp?i=85250> [Arabic]). Despite the repetitive demolition, its people are still living there steadfastly. The village symbolises the unwavering insistence of its people to live in dignity on their land.

possible...” stated Avigdor Lieberman in February 2002, then the minister responsible for land management (quoted in Yiftachel 2006: 3).<sup>59</sup>

Over the years, with the loss of the majority of its land, the remaining Palestinian peasantry was transformed into what Zureik (1978: 131) calls a “marginal proletariat,” who had to commute to Jewish cities and towns in search of a living. Palestinians were left with only 3 per cent of land under their control and many village economies that had previously been agricultural-based lost the capacity for viable agricultural production. This fundamental change in the production-base and the socio-economics of the village or the proletarianisation of the village has been called by some academics, the like of Khamaisi (2005), “selective and misshapen urbanisation.”

This process of urbanisation without urbanism has accelerated over the years. Despite the Palestinians’ exponential growth, from 156,000 in 1948 to 1,694,000 in 2014, making up 20.7% of Israel’s population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014), the physical expansion of their villages and towns has been proscribed by Israel’s land and planning policies. The designated jurisdiction area of 2.5 per cent of land, where they are allowed to build their houses, has remained constant (Khamaisi 2000; Yiftachel 1998).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The statement was made in reference to the Bedouins of the Naqab, on the day the Israeli government sent light planes to spray twelve thousands dunums of crops with poisonous chemicals. The act was repeated in October 2002, April 2003 and 2004 (Yiftachel 2006: 3).

<sup>60</sup> Unlike Jewish settlements and towns, land in Palestinian localities is privately owned and housing is self-provided, which means that Palestinians build their own houses on their private land. On the challenges this system poses on Palestinians’ everyday life see chapter 6 on planning.

In mixed cities, where Jews and Palestinian Arabs “occupy the same urban jurisdiction” (Yacobi 2009:1), a state of racial spatial segregation exists in most cases. While the term mixed cities could abstractly suggest that the two communities are integrated, the reality, however, is more complex.<sup>61</sup> The built-environment in these cities has been framed by “a prevailing ethnocentric drive for Judaization” (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2005: 144), and is shaped by the logic of ethno-nationalism (Yacobi 2002).<sup>62</sup> This is manifested in the “spatial patterns of segregation between the Jewish dominant majority and the Arab subordinate minority” (ibid), which according to Yacobi demonstrates “the inherent nexus between the disciplines of planning and urban design and the realization of the modern Zionist utopia.”

Wherever they live, whether in the villages and towns of the Galilee, the Naqab (Negev), the Triangle, or the mixed cities of Haifa, Akka, Jaffa, Ramlih or Il-Lydd, Palestinians have been stripped of their right to a functioning city and citizenship.<sup>63</sup> The process of urbanisation without urbanism has transferred their villages and towns into what the research calls suspended dormitory spaces.

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<sup>61</sup> The term mixed cities, as Yacobi (2009:1) argues, misleadingly “raises images of mutual membership while ignoring questions of power, control and resistance.”

<sup>62</sup> On the meaning of ethnocracy see the section: Why bother: same old story, new methods, new angles.

<sup>63</sup> The thesis uses mostly Naqab, as opposed to Negev.

## Governmentality and control - When war is not an option: Research arguments and analytical concepts

Aren't processes of domination more complex, more complicated, than war?

Foucault (December 1977) <sup>64</sup>

When you have thus formed the chain of ideas on the heads of your citizens, you will then be able to pride yourselves on guiding them and being their masters. A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas... and on the soft fibres of the brain is founded the unshakable base of the soundest of Empires.

Joseph Servan (quoted in Foucault 1979: 102-3)

In his book *Citizen and Subject* (1996:3), Mahmood Mamdani argues that in the context of a colonial state, the native question - the problem of securing and stabilising the colonials' rule - becomes a riddle preoccupying "the best of its minds." Foucault, as quoted above, reminds us that processes of domination are more complex than war. In the case of Israel, as a settler colonial state governed by ethnic absolutism, with a sizeable Palestinian population which shares its territoriality and resides the dialectics of citizens and enemies, the question of how best to govern and

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in (Fontana and Bertani 2003: 282). See Fontana, A. and Bertani, M. (2003) 'Situating the Lectures', in Foucault, M. *Society must be Defended*. New York: Picador.

control this population becomes more challenging when options such as military violence and large-scale forced transfer are more difficult to pursue.<sup>65</sup>

While the research acknowledges that the control of Palestinians rests upon a synergy between spatial, social, economic, political and military technologies, it argues that forms of domination and subjugation, their simultaneous inclusion and exclusion continues to operate in and through space. At the centre of these structures of control stands the urban question, the materiality of the city, and its quotidian conditions and their role in shaping social, political and cultural orders.

This thesis' premise is that the city, the citizen and public space, if not controlled and managed, form a potential threat to the state, regardless of the character of the latter, whether capitalist, democratic or (post)colonial. This anxiety becomes particularly acute in a colonial setting. The thesis therefore argues that the deliberate destruction of Palestinian cities did not end in 1948, but continues in the form of urbicide and slow violence. Urbicide is understood as the deliberate absenting and killing of the city, not by obliterating and physically destroying it in its entirety by means of war, but rather by coercively detaining and controlling its economic, socio-spatial growth

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<sup>65</sup> In recent years the idea of transfer has been advocated by a number of Israeli politicians. Although they are small in number, the very fact that it has been discussed in public gives the idea some sort of legitimacy among some segments of the Jewish public. In an article in *Haaretz* from the 19 April 2002, Avigdor Lieberman, then the Minister of Infrastructure said: "There is nothing undemocratic about transfer; even in Europe millions were transferred from one place to another and it helped to bring peace...The separation, like surgery, helps healing... When I see Arabs going to blow themselves in Haifa or Nahariyya, or Arabs who donate to terrorists' families- if it depended on me, they wouldn't have stayed here one minute, they and their families" (quoted in Yiftachel 2006: 184). On the idea of transfer resurfacing, as Yiftachel calls it, see (ibid). More specifically relating to the case of Umm al-Fahem see the discussion of Lieberman's proposal for a demographic and land swap in chapter 5. Note that Lieberman remains an influential politician in Israel, and currently serves as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

and urbanity by means of what could be qualified as slow violence.<sup>66</sup> Slow violence, in this context, is performed through racialised land and planning policies, marginalisation, under-budgeting and persistent neglect of the city's materiality and infrastructure. Urbicide is thus tantamount to the deprivation of the right to the city.

Linked to urbicide is the privatisation of experiences. The state, through its land and spatial planning policies, as well as its withdrawal from providing basic services such as housing, job opportunities and public transportation, encourages individualism and the atomisation of social structures.<sup>67</sup> When socio-spatial conditions are privatised and confined to private spaces and spheres: the family, the private home, the private space, and private car, these ultimately contribute to the privatisation and atomisation of the social. Under such conditions, people become consumed with their personal

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<sup>66</sup> Stephen Graham, Professor of Cities and Society at the Global Urban Research Unit at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University, employs the concept of urbicide to describe Israel's policies of deliberate destruction in the battle of Jenin in 2002 (See Graham, S. (2002) 'Clean Territory: Urbicide in the West Bank', available at: [www.openDemocracy.net](http://www.openDemocracy.net) , and Graham, S. (2003) 'Lessons in Urbicide', *New Left Review*, 19: January-February, pp. 63-77). The term urbicide appeared in Berman Marshal (1996) 'Falling Towers: City Life after Urbicide', in Crow, D. (ed.), *Geography and Identity*. Washington, DC: Maitsonneuve Press, pp. 172-92. Urbicide was also used by the architect Bogdan Bogdanovitch in his description of the deliberate cultural annihilation of Sarajevo and other Balkan cities ([www.openDemocracy.net](http://www.openDemocracy.net)).

<sup>67</sup> For more details on spatial planning and its effects on privatisation and atomisation, please see chapter 6 on spatial planning.

daily matters and private lives, thus diminishing their citizenship and participation in collective civil political and life.<sup>68</sup>

Absence of urbanity is another facet of urbicide. Absence of urbanity, in this context, means the homogenisation of the social fabric that contributes to the encouragement of rural, traditional and parochial ways of thinking and the proliferation of the gazing and controlling eye of society.<sup>69</sup> Under these conditions, people are expected to conform to existing social norms, and are less open to difference. Therefore, social control becomes local because of a less heterogeneous and relatively closed population, confined to a restricted space.<sup>70</sup> This system of control is one from within, and is potentially more effective and less costly for the state. It relies on society to control and govern itself through its traditions and norms. It encourages people to

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<sup>68</sup> Hannah Arendt (1998 [1958]) in *The Human Condition* has aptly described the essence of privatisation. For her, to be private is to be “deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them.” It is “to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an ‘objective’ relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself. The privation of privacy lies in the absence of others ... [Those who are private are] imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience...”(1998 [1958]: 58). On a more concrete and critical level, especially in a racially segregated society, Paul Gilroy (2010: 22), in his book *Darker than Blue* critiquing the African American car culture, notes how its privatising character not only diminishes citizenship but also “confiscates the possibility of collective experience, synchronised suffering, and acting in concert.” He argues, “In these circumstances, the automobile becomes the instrument of segregation and privatisation, not an aid to their overcoming” (ibid).

<sup>69</sup> Rural, in this context, is free of value judgment. It is not in reference to inferiority, but rather to cosmopolitanism and openness to the other.

<sup>70</sup> Social control under these conditions is by no means unique to Umm al-Fahem. Giddens (1981) argued that this form of control is characteristic of closed, insular and static communities. In his analysis of medieval communities which were relatively closed and static, Giddens argued that because “everyone...knew everyone else...there was no need for a particularly developed system of control and surveillance” (Giddens 1981, quoted in Nigel Thrift 1995: 66).



invest their energies and thoughts in social, local and private affairs, thus again contributing to the diminishing of their citizenship.<sup>71</sup>

As shown in the case of Umm al-Fahem, the thesis argues that in cities where politics are vibrant and people are aware of and resisting their oppressed conditions by vocally demanding their collective rights, and where absenting the city and the creation of a suspended space are not enough to control people, the state resorts to additional means and technologies of control. One form of control is through the encouragement of religious politics which by definition reduce subjects to their faith. Encouraging the hegemony of religious identities which prioritise the social and the moral, or the biopolitical, over the collective experience of national oppression, becomes a valuable technology of control, as these identities inherently work towards the fragmentation of society along religious lines.

Biopolitics, in this context, is employed to describe the Islamic Movement's projects and objectives which it prioritised in its early years in office, and which were succinctly captured in its slogan "Islam is the solution." The concept proves insightful to the analysis of the Movement's mode of governmentality. This is despite the fact that biopolitics, in its original Foucauldian sense, was not developed in relation to (post)colonial, religious contexts, or the analysis at the level of the individual, but rather worked to analyse processes of life at the level of population, its demographics, birth rate, longevity, public health, housing and migration, as Foucault discussed in

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<sup>71</sup> See chapter 6 on planning and the contribution of the land and planning system to the controlling gazing eye of society. Chapter 7 on control from within also touches on this point and how religious gendered sartorial practices contribute to the spatialisation of female bodies and to bringing those bodies which are unveiled to the scrutinising eyes of society.

the *History of Sexuality* (1991:140). The concept is stretched here to accommodate its function as an interventionist technology and practice which seeks to govern at the level of both the singular body and the collective, in the name of a higher morality and the correction of society.

The Foucauldian concept of biopolitics is conjoined with the Gramscian concept of hegemony. This thesis understands hegemony as ruling by (active) consent. As demonstrated in the case of Umm al-Fahem, over the last 25 years, the Islamic Movement has been repeatedly elected to lead the local government. The Movement, since it first took office in 1989, has been winning the trust and support of the majority of Fahmawis.

Against this background, the thesis adopts four concepts that make up the analytical framework which help to conceptualise the Palestinian city. These are ‘suspension,’ ‘urbicide by other means,’ ‘religious identities,’ and ‘biopolitical hegemony.’ Drawing on Foucault’s dynamic concept of governmentality (1991, 2003, 2007), the thesis argues that these interconnected technologies of control are part of a governmentality project whose underlying objective is the management of Palestinians in ways that produce suspended, domesticated and fragmented cities and citizens. These technologies are employed to shape the general conditions of everyday life, control the conduct of cities and their citizens and perpetuate a state of dependency.

Foucault’s concept of governmentality is the most suitable analytical concept that allows complex and multiple technologies of control and power to explain the management of populations and the conditions of their everyday existence.

Governmentality, for Foucault (1991: 102, 2009: 108), means among other things, “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target.” Broadly speaking, it is about the technologies and procedures designated for directing human conduct (2009: 388).

Lastly, to help contextualise and conceptualise the Palestine city, this thesis draws on Carl Schmitt’s theory of the *nomos*. Although Schmitt will always be remembered for his role as a jurist who actively supported and legitimised the inhumane Nazi regime, which was responsible for the Holocaust, brutal occupations and other war crimes, his theory of the *nomos* gives special attention to deconstructing the relationship between spatial ordering, power, and law, and therefore proves insightful to the understanding of the historical, structural factors which shape and account for the (un)making of the Palestinian city.<sup>72</sup>

### **Why bother? Same old story, new methods, new angles**

Israeli mainstream social sciences scholarship on Palestinians, especially those in Israel, adopts a de-historicised, culturist, and ethnicised approach which naturalises and essentialises notions of difference and presents them as innate and natural, rather than being historically, socially and politically constructed. The socio-political developments of what are often referred to as “Israeli Arabs” or “Arab Israelis” are explained through the “Arab mentality,” and the *hamula* (extended family), as the

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<sup>72</sup> See chapter 4, Israel’s colonial *nomos*, for more details on the concept of the *nomos*.

basic unit of social organisation, which follows the dictates of a conservatively run society ruled by traditions and customs.<sup>73</sup> Such scholarship frequently divides the population along ethnic and religious lines and promotes the state as an agent of modernity which modernised Palestinian villages.<sup>74</sup>

Edward Said (1994), Elia Zureik (1979), and Talal Asad (1975) have been critical of such a paradigm which, “has been dedicated to accentuating the cultural and psychological peculiarities of Arabs and Jews” (Zureik 1979:2), with little or no attention to foreign domination, social, political and structural changes. Asad (1975), critiquing anthropological texts on Palestinian Arabs, especially Cohen Abner’s (1959) description of Arab border villages in Israel, notes that such texts, though presented as objective, are in fact ideologically motivated. They employ abstract theoretical categories such as ethnicity to “disguise the contradictions generated by exploitation and repression” (1975: 275). The “hamula,” he argues, “was the ideological resolution of a Zionist problem - for it constituted a mode of control and

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<sup>73</sup>The production of knowledge that constructs and shapes the Jewish Israeli public discourse on the “Arabs” is not limited to academia. State media, for example, employs what they call ‘Arabist’ commentators, who are specialists in the Arab culture and mentality, and whose main role is to reproduce the orientalist image of the Arab. On a different but related level, one personal anecdote illustrates the argument and the power of discourse. In 2003, on one of my travels to Europe, as part of the normal procedure at Ben-Gurion International airport, I was asked a few questions before the check-in. When the security guard, who was a man, found out that I was a Palestinian, he gave me a rather bewildered and surprised look, and asked: “how come an Arab young woman is traveling by herself?!” implying that Arab women have no agency and are subordinate to men in their patriarchal society.

<sup>74</sup>Oren Yiftachel (2002) in his article ‘The Shrinking Space of Citizenship: Ethnocratic politics in Israel’, *Middle East Research and Information Project*, No 223, talks about the stratified system of citizenship which exists in Israel. According to him, this system is attributed to “the combination of Judaization policies and religious-legal control” (ibid: 3). In such a system each category, mainly among the religious groups is subdivided. “The groups include: a) ‘mainstream’ Jewish citizens, b) ultra-Orthodox Jews, c) ‘pseudo-Jews’ (mainly Russian immigrants recognized as Jews under the Israeli law of return, but not recognized as such by the religious establishment), d) Druze, f) Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship, g) Bedouins, h) East Jerusalem and Golan Arabs, i) Palestinians in the rest of the West Bank and Gaza and j) immigrant labor” (ibid).

an imputed identity for the only political existence allowed to Arab villagers in Israel” (ibid: 274).

Since the 1990s, critical approaches in the social sciences have emerged in Israel, especially in the fields of political geography and urban planning.<sup>75</sup> These tend to analyse Israel’s land and planning policies and the contentious Judaization of the Galilee and the Naqab through new theoretical tools: ethnocracy and ethno-nationalism.<sup>76</sup> In ethnocratic regimes, it is ethnicity, not territorial citizenship, which determines access to power and the allocation of resources (Yiftachel 1998, 2006). However, such scholarly paradigms have in some cases overlooked colonialism and racism as a framing background. It was only in 2008, in an article, ‘Epilogue: Studying al-Naqab/Negev Bedouins - Toward a colonial paradigm?’ that Yiftachel advocated colonialism as the lens through which Israel’s spatial policies should be analysed.<sup>77</sup> For him, the colonial paradigm “exposes the previous scholarly ‘politics of depoliticization’ as it shows how the overlooking of the colonial setting conceals state and ethnic oppressions - hence, my call for a scholarship that would not only be accurate, but also amend the distortions of the power-knowledge nexus of previous studies” (2008: 177).

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<sup>75</sup> Amongst these academics are Oren Yiftachel and Haim Yacobi. Architect and Professor of Visual Cultures Eyal Weizman and historian Ilan Pappé have both contributed immensely to the critique of the Zionist project and the popularisation of the Palestinian question in academic circles. Each in his own way has contributed to shedding new light onto the scholarship of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. See *Hollow Land* (2007), Weizman’s seminal work on Israel’s architecture of occupation and its spatial policies in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territories, and *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006) by Pappé. Both scholars reside outside of Israel, in the UK.

<sup>76</sup> The concept of ethnocracy was initially developed in the mid 1990s by the Israeli critical geographer Oren Yiftachel.

<sup>77</sup> As Yiftachel argues very little research has analysed Israel within a colonial framework (ibid 2008: 173).

This thesis challenges and seeks to unsettle the culturist, orientalist, dehistoricised and ethnicised approaches to the study of Palestinians, especially Palestinians inside Israel. It argues that those approaches are characteristic of a colonial order which seeks to essentialise difference and to gloss over structures of oppression and institutionalised racism. Culture in this sense is the veil behind which mainstream academia seeks to hide the state's racialised policies.<sup>78</sup> It is employed to dismiss Palestinians' political agency by presenting them as passive and powerless receivers, and blaming their underdevelopment solely on what is characterised as their conservative, chaotic, unorganised and undemocratic culture.

This thesis' reference to racism draws on Paul Gilroy's theory of race and racism where he asserts that there is no race but racism.<sup>79</sup> Racism refers to a system of exclusion and inferiorisation which is predicated on power relations. This system creates racial hierarchies. It produces a racialised and hierarchised space, and demarcates the boundaries between those who belong and those who do not.

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<sup>78</sup> During the years of my activism in Israel, one of the common arguments presented by mainstream Israeli Jews, young and old alike, against arguments for a one state solution, is that Arabs are not democratic. As well as being framed through an orientalist, supremacist and racist lens, their argument implies that democratic values are of genetic disposition, not socially and politically contingent, as if the Palestinians belong to a group that is not capable of being democratic.

<sup>79</sup> The research does not imply, or recognise the Palestinians and the Jews as belonging to different races. The project is not concerned with the question of whether the Jewish people is a race, either. On the argument of "there is no race but racism," it would be valuable to recall what Frantz Fanon observed decades ago. "At first thought it may seem strange that the anti-Semite's outlook should be related to that of the Negrophobe. It was my philosophy professor, a native of Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: "Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you." And I found that he was universally right- by which I meant that I was answerable in my body and my heart for what was done to my brother. Later, I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably anti-Negro" FRANTZ FANON (quoted in Gilroy 2004: 1)

This thesis rejects such supremacist discourses and approaches to the study of Palestinians, and argues that Israel's policies of depriving the Palestinians of the right to the city and urbanity are a direct result of its colonial *nomos*, through which the state seeks to dominate and control its Palestinian population by creating suspended, fragmented and domesticated bodies and spaces.

By giving agency to the people of Umm al-Fahem to narrate the story of their city, deconstruct its nominal status and functionality, as well as critically untangle the relationships between the historical, the urban, the social, the economic, this thesis wishes to bring to light new angles and new voices which have been under-researched and underrepresented.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the Palestinian city as both an abstract concept and a lived space has hardly been researched. In addition, by situating the research within a multidisciplinary, inter and intra-disciplinary scholarly framework, where the historical, the sociological, the (post)colonial, the cultural, the political, and the urban merge together, along with employing mixed methodologies of ethnography and photography, the thesis seeks to bring together new perspectives which have not been presented before.

## **Chapter outline**

The title of this thesis engages directly with my argument that the absence of a functioning Palestinian city in Israel is a direct outcome of deliberate policies which work towards depriving the Palestinians of the right to the city, and the production of

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<sup>80</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the research which has been done on the Palestinians in Israel, see Sabbagh-Khoury, A. (2005) *Bibliography on the Palestinians in Israel and Related Issues*. Haifa: Mada al-Carmel: Arab Center for Applied Social Research.

a suspended space that has an effect on their socio-economic, cultural and political development. The thesis is organised as a plait made of independent but interconnected threads which weave together to produce one unit. Reflecting its multi, inter, and intra-disciplinary character, it is organised thematically along two parts and around seven chapters (excluding the conclusion) which converge to deconstruct historical, political and social factors that shape the (un)making of the Palestinian city under post(colonial) conditions.

Part one, including the introduction, is divided into four chapters that introduce the subject and its context, and discuss the theoretical foundation and methodological aspects of the thesis. The two theory chapters are dedicated to the question of the city, urbanity and public space on one hand, and Israel's *nomos*, on the other. Part two of the thesis engages directly with Umm al-Fahem and is divided into three substantive, empirical data chapters, numbered five, six, and seven.

Chapter one, the introduction, starts by presenting a condensed history of Umm al-Fahem to pave the way for introducing the subject of the Palestinian city and the different historical, social, political, and structural factors which need to be untangled throughout the thesis. It presents the genesis of the project, its research questions and conceptualises the Palestinian city in Israel. The introduction situates Umm al-Fahem and the question of the Palestinian city and urbanisation as part of the Palestinian collective that cannot be understood in isolation from its pre-1948 history. Therefore, it provides a brief history of the Palestinian city and urbanisation before and after 1948. It then presents the research arguments and its key analytical and theoretical tools and framework, followed by the scholarly contribution it wishes to make.



Chapter two outlines the different methodological aspects of the research and the process of deconstructing for constructing aimed at forming an understanding of the contemporary Palestinian city. The methodological aspects include the rationale behind choosing the case study, the research questions, the various methods employed; the ethnographic experience and the challenges involved in conducting a research in politicised, contested, (post)colonial contexts. The chapter captures the organic process of how the research, its questions and methods, developed and evolved to reflect the material which emerged from the initial ethnographic experience.

Chapter three outlines one of the thesis' theoretical foundations, that is the question of the city, public space and urbanity. It is a literature review which deconstructs the three concepts and their indispensable role in enhancing citizenship, politics, public life, culture, creativity and personal freedoms. It discusses their potentialities and challenges, and puts forward the argument that cities and public spaces are produced and constructed in ways that reflect, and reproduce social, economic and political relations. It discusses public space under neoliberal and colonial conditions as an exclusionary-exclusive site and concludes that regardless of the state's character and nature, whether capitalist or colonial, urban space, public space, and the undesirables are perceived as threats that need to be fragmented and controlled. The undesirables are often classed and racialised. In a colonial context they are the colonised. The chapter's overall objective is to anchor the Palestinian city in the wider context of what makes a city and to address meta-questions of why the city and why public space.

Chapter four is concerned with the thesis' second theoretical foundation. It takes up the subject of the state's foundational character and its juridico-political order that impinges on and shapes both the very essence of the Palestinian city and citizenship, and their (un)making. It introduces Carl Schmitt's concept of the *nomos* and Paul Gilroy's ethnic absolutism, and argues that its "Jews only" inscriptions are Manichaean and exclusionary-exclusive in character. By defining itself as a Jewish state and a state of the Jews, Israel not only engages in an unfinished transformative project of spatial and demographic colonisation, but also sets itself as a state that can never be a state of all its citizens. This *nomos* treats Palestinians as a problem that needs to be governed and controlled, and perpetuates their citizen-enemy suspended dialectic.

Chapter five concentrates on Umm al-Fahem's historical sociology from 1949, when it was handed over to Israel, to the mid-1980s, when it was declared a city. Three main and interconnected themes run through this chapter. These are governmentality, Fahmawis' response to it, and the materiality of the village/city. The chapter deconstructs the workings of (post)colonial governmentality in the way the state sought to govern Umm al-Fahem on one hand, and Fahmawis' resilience, defiance, agency and determination to achieve substantive citizenship, and to build a village/city buzzing with culture, creativity and solidarity, on the other hand.

The chapter puts forward the argument that the underlying objectives of the different technologies which constitute governmentality, whether direct military rule, co-option, material incentives, divide and rule, criminalisation of resisting political activists, (in)direct intervention in local politics, the state's withdrawal from providing services and negligence of urban infrastructure, or perpetuating a state of

suspension, is to control Umm al-Fahem and render Fahmawis docile and domesticated who are stuck in a state of suspension. Its overall objective is to unravel the nature of the city and citizenship under (post)colonial conditions and discuss some of the historical factors which shape its making. Situating the chapter as part of a holistic, one-unit thesis, helps demonstrate that the technologies of control which the state employed throughout Umm al-Fahem's history, from 1949 onwards (to-date), have not been monotonous.

Chapter six engages in a critical deconstructs the subject of spatial planning and the land system at work and their socio-spatial and economic implications as demonstrated in the case of Umm al-Fahem. It argues that the state, through its centralised, comprehensive and hierarchised planning system, employs spatial planning as a powerful technology of control and governmentality which contributes to a state of urbicide by deliberately detaining and withholding the economic and spatial development of the city. It argues that this ultimately contributes to the production of suspended, docile, socially-controlled, privatised, atomised and dependent Palestinian bodies and spaces.

The chapter's objective is to demonstrate how this system and its policies shape the very materiality and character of Umm al-Fahem, its present and future trajectory, the conditions of its everyday life, its socio-spatial make-up, and the prospects for socio-economic and spatial development. Moreover, the chapter seek to illustrate how this system is politicised and racialised, and is employed to serve political ends, not the wellbeing of Fahmawis and Palestinians in general. This chapter, in other words, is also about unpacking how Palestinians are deprived of the right to the city and how

they are subjected to attempts to reduce their lives to the fulfilment of the rudimentary functions of eating, drinking, reproducing and consuming.

Chapter seven takes up the subject of control from within through the incorporation of Fahmawis into their own subjugation and the attempts to reduce them to their faith. In other words, the chapter deconstructs the workings of governmentality as manifested in Umm al-Fahem's contemporary socio-spatial and political order, particularly throughout the immediate years around 1989. 1989 was the year that witnessed the enduring decline of the communist-led local government and the rise of the Islamic Movement to power. Governmentality is deployed in relation to two different but interconnected contexts. The first context is in relation to how Israel, through employing a mixture of technologies and through using the democratic structure of local elections sought to change the power configurations in the city. It discusses how the state sought to neutralise and incapacitate the then challenging communist-led local government, and instead encourage tamed religious identities.

The second context relates to how the victorious Islamic Movement sought to render Umm al-Fahem governable. The chapter puts forward the argument that the Movement's mode of government is biopolitical hegemony. It discusses the Movement's biopolitical projects and deconstructs the mechanisms which helped it establish its dominance. The chapter demonstrates how the materiality of the city, urban performance and promoting religion as the panacea for all the mundane, social, spiritual, and moral ailments in society, along with the new levels of state sponsorship stand at the centre of the fundamental change in the city's local political map.

Lastly, the conclusion chapter briefly summarises the subject of the thesis, its premises and research questions and conclusions. It briefly describes how the research developed organically and in correspondence to material which emerged from the initial ethnographic experience and its methodological challenges. It illustrates how the thesis had to be situated within multiple, inter and intra-disciplines which combined the historical, the sociological, the (post)colonial, the urban, the cultural and the political together. The chapter, in the process of conceptualising the Palestinian city, engages with empirical findings and conclusions, and ends with recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2 Methodology



Figure 2: First day of fieldwork: Umm al-Fahem 9 June 2009: 8:03 am



Figure 3: Kids negotiating their way between cars Figure 4: The neighbour who runs a nursery

### **Getting started: a woman with a camera**

“Take a photograph of the kids between the cars,” shouted a man from behind who seemed to have rushed towards me when he noticed I was taking photos of a jammed street (figure 2). He sounded keen to have me document the conditions of the street and was disturbed by the fact that the drivers did not care about the street sign, which clearly stated it was a one-way street, nor about the safety of pedestrians, especially the kids. This was in an early morning in June 2009, when I accompanied my brother who was giving his wife a lift to her work in Umm al-Fahem, and was meanwhile stuck in bad traffic. It was both my first time in the narrow alleyways of the city and my first day in the field. All I had pre-scheduled and planned for the day was an interview with the city’s strategic planner who worked for the local government, and a visit to the city’s nationally renowned art gallery, *Galleria*, where I had arranged to meet with its director.

The journey to school where my sister-in-law worked, which is in the old crowded, steep and labyrinth-like part of the city, was stimulating and captivating for me as a researcher with a camera, interested in urban environments and people’s socio-spatial experiences. Upon my arrival in the city I was immediately entranced by it. I felt intrigued and looked forward to spending time in it, getting to know it and know its people and learn about its past and present. What was immediately visible and intriguing about the city was its sense of contradictions and postcoloniality: the juxtapositions of the global and the local, order and disorder, the rich and the poor, the old and the modern, the religious and the mundane. The city seemed to be a consumerist bonanza, with a lot of things going on and a lot to offer a researcher.

The city's entrance was straddled by a big store of the Israeli chain Super-pharm<sup>81</sup> on one side of the main national artery road of Wadi Ara, and a police station on the other side. A few metres into the city, a market area branched off the main road and overlooked Wadi Ara. The market bustled with life. Continuing on the main road, I felt bombarded by big commercial billboards, advertising both local and global brands. To my surprise, I noticed the iconic pre-state Kapulsky café, in one of the complexes of stores located on one side of the main road.<sup>82</sup> Before not too long, I could also see the unmistakable, conspicuous and imposing icon of the MacDonald's sign. I soon realised that the sign was adorning a post-modern styled mall of glass and steel. The mall, of course, hosted other international brands, such as Pizza Hut and Keds: Kids and Baby, along with Naa'Naa', another Israeli café chain. All along, publicity billboards, both in Hebrew and Arabic, dotted the road. The signs however were not exclusive to commerce only. Political and religious signs, though smaller in size and less conspicuous, also featured amongst the signs on the main road.

Continuing with my journey I could feel more and more the city's vibe. I could see the hustle and bustle of people negotiating the space and pushing their way through the cars. I could feel how inescapable the cityscape was and how mixed it was. I noticed the wide and narrow streets, old and modern, spacious and crammed buildings, affluent and poor houses, the big mosques and the Islamic designed

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<sup>81</sup> Super-pharm is a pharmacy and beauty products chain in Israel. It is the Israeli equivalent of Boots or Superdrug in the UK.

<sup>82</sup> Kapulsky is a Jewish pre-state café, established in 1934 and has branches in many Israeli Jewish towns and cities. It is considered among Israelis as "legendary" and symbolic of the middle class type of cafe. For a brief history of the café, see: Zomer N. 2011 'Kapulsky Café Making a Comeback', *Ynetnews*, 14 February 2011 : <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L4025535,00.html>.



roundabouts, and the normative religious signs reminding people to pray and recite small prayers and asking women to wear *hijabs*. This small journey, though so short in time yet so intense, left an immense impression on me. Invigorated with adrenaline, I could not wait to get out of the car and start chatting to people and take photographs. Getting stuck in traffic seemed to be the perfect moment to get started.

Taking photos provoked interest amongst those surrounding me. Sparing no time, and taking advantage of the moment, I introduced myself and gave a generic idea about the research to my first random contact, the man who earlier rushed towards me to ask if I could take photos of the kids between cars. The concerned man, a doctor at a local surgery, immediately and without hesitation agreed to be interviewed. Meanwhile, a veiled woman in her forties standing outside her small shop next door to the school selling stationery was staring at me and seemed to be wondering about my presence and why I was taking photos of an ordinary street at that time of the day. She had witnessed the brief encounter between me and the doctor from across the narrow street.

Conscious of her gaze and motivated by the need to get started, I greeted her and immediately approached her, introducing myself with a warm handshake. Intentionally speaking with the local accent, I told her I was from the neighbouring village/town,<sup>83</sup> and immediately flashed out my university business card to clear off any doubts she might have about my researcher identity. Without hesitation and

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<sup>83</sup> The dash between village and town emphasises the state of ambiguity that characterises the status and perception of Palestinian localities. Kufur Qari is not a village in the traditional sense. It is not officially recognised or classified as a town, either. In 2012, the village/town was home to about 16,500 residents (Statistical Abstract of Israel 2013).

without taking much notice of the card she agreed to be interviewed. While talking to her, a next-door neighbour, who ran a nursery down the street (figure 4), showed interest in the scene and joined us in conversation. She also answered my request to be interviewed positively. All the three people I had met thus far gave me their mobile numbers so that I could contact them to arrange a time to meet. Within less than 10 minutes, while my brother was still stuck in traffic, the project was already on its way.

Photography, in this context and without any previous plans to use it as a research facilitator, did prove to be, as Pink (2007: 73) notes, a successful entry point to the research.<sup>84</sup> It created a situation that mediated the first contact with potential research collaborators.<sup>85</sup> It served as a “can opener,” in terms of establishing rapport with them, as Collier and Collier (1986: quoted *ibid*) would say. Noteworthy, however, is the very first impression of the welcoming, warm, positive and smooth reception radiated from those random locals which certainly gave me the push and confidence and wrote off fears about where and how to start.

In what follows, I first give an outline of research design and its process: what the research is about; why I chose Umm al-Fahem as my case study; the research questions; how I came to choose my preliminary methods for what I call the

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<sup>84</sup>Sarah Pink notes that some ethnographers/photographers find it challenging to start their project with photography. Only after a while of building trust and finding other ways to connect to the researched group does photography become possible. See Pink (2007:143) who tells the story of Shanklin who described her role as ethnographer/photographer during her research of rural Ireland, how she found out that her initial plan to photograph people at work was inappropriate. Only once she had established herself as someone who took photographs within the local community, did she find she could proceed by photographing agricultural workers at work as she had originally intended.

<sup>85</sup> I refer to informants as fieldwork interviewees or collaborators. I employ the two terms interchangeably. For those who themselves were research collaborators but have directed me and put me in touch with other interviewees, I refer to them as gatekeepers.

deconstructing for constructing process; and how the research, its questions and its versatile methods, including ethnographic work, historical and discourse analysis, as well as archival research, developed organically and in correspondence to the research needs and the material that was emerging from the field. In retrospect, I refer to this process as the different stages of research. I then give a brief theoretical background on the ethnographic and visual methods used for the research. Lastly, before finishing with the section on breaking the boundaries and building trust with the research collaborators, I engage in a reflective process on some of the material that emerged from the field and the methodological, contextual and positional challenges of conducting research in a politicised context(s).

### **Deconstructing for constructing: Research design, interviewees and gatekeepers**

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852).

Concerned with trying to form an understanding of the Palestinian city in Israel, its materiality, the semiotics of its public space and its socio-spatiality, the way it is perceived by its residents, and the social and political actors involved in its production and (un)making, a process of deconstructing for constructing was essential. Umm al-Fahem, the first Palestinian village in Israel to be declared a city, was my chosen site

of research.<sup>86</sup> Possessing little knowledge about Umm al-Fahem, and reviving a long-standing interest in getting to know it and learn about it were enough to make it my definite choice of research site.<sup>87</sup>

Its geographical proximity to my village, about 8 km (4.9 miles) away, made it even more attractive for both convenience and research purposes. Practically, it meant that one of my siblings or friends could give me a lift, if s/he were available, or I could catch any passing shuttle or bus from the main road of Wadi Ara.<sup>88</sup> The fact that, despite such proximity, I had hardly ever set foot in the city was in itself interesting and revealing. Geographical proximity did not mean connection and dependency between the two localities, despite the fact that Umm al-Fahem's population was three times bigger. The two, to my experience and in many different respects, were insular, disconnected units.<sup>89</sup> Not because the two places were self-contained and independent. If I want to be crude and reductionist, I would say that one visits a city if it caters for his and her needs; whether work, study, cultural, leisure or seeking

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<sup>86</sup> Umm al-Fahem was the second largest Palestinian city up until the late 1990s, early 2000s. It was then taken over by the city of Rahat in the Naqab that the state built in 1972 as part of a sedentary process to settle the nomadic Bedouin Arabs of the Naqab. In 1983, for example, two years before Umm al-Fahem was declared a city, Umm al-Fahem's population was 21,000. Rahat had only 9200 (Statistical Abstract of Israel 2013).

<sup>87</sup> The interest in the city was particularly nurtured throughout my studenthood in Jerusalem in the mid 1990s. Students from Umm al-Fahem were in the leadership of Palestinian students movements. At the time, many were involved in nationalist and leftist politics. For more details on this point see section below on gaining access.

<sup>88</sup> Both Umm al-Fahem and my hometown are located on the main road of Wadi Ara. Wadi Ara is an artery road connecting the north of the country to the centre and south. For example, many shuttles and buses to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Be'er Sheva' in the centre and south pass along it on their way north and vice versa. It should be noted that at the time of the research there was no direct public transport available connecting the centre of my hometown to that of Umm al-Fahem's.

<sup>89</sup> This is not to argue that social and amicable relationships did not exist between members of the two places. On the levels of politics, at the time of the voluntary work brigades of early 1980s, communist activists from my hometown did take part in them, as field interviewees told me. I also know that supporter of the Islamic Movement and families who want their kids to learn the Quran by heart send their kids to Umm al-Fahem to receive these services. Moreover, in the last decade, Umm al-Fahem's thriving food and vegetable market attracts people from my hometown as well.

administrative and bureaucratic services. Throughout my adulthood in the 1990s before moving to study and live in Jerusalem, Umm al-Fahem fulfilled none of these needs, and offered none of these services. It was the neighbouring Jewish town of Hadera that provided some of them.

Sticking to my belief in original research that follows its own instincts in the way it should be conducted, rather than lending itself to some generic methodological blueprints, in the summer of 2009 I jumped into the cold deep water of the world of fieldwork. All I was interested in was to get started, be in the field, and be open, flexible and attentive. Admittedly, this resonates strongly with my personality which prefers to learn by doing. Having said that, I did have a preliminary, if primitive, idea of how I should go about structuring and conducting the research, at least in its first stage.

Grounded in my belief that subjectivities and objective conditions, or what I call here the materiality of the city, are not separable from questions of structure, I thought two sets of research groups should be interviewed. These were the city's residents and the local government, represented by the strategic planning department. I also thought that interviews alone were not enough to capture the lived experience of the city. Strolling through the streets of the city, exploring and photographing its built-environment and experiencing its socio-spatiality first hand were no less valuable than interviews. Embedding myself in the field, I employed a mixture of qualitative methods that could be qualified as ethnographic and seemed to be the most suitable for this first stage of research. Participatory observation, in-depth structured and semi-structured interviews, group interviews, as well as visual methods were all mobilised to help with the deconstructing for constructing process.

The leading research question put forward to both ordinary interviewees and the city's planning department was quite simple: Is Umm al-Fahem a city? A cluster of sub-questions about the materiality of the city; regarding its public spaces, public facilities and infrastructure, its spatiality and its (il)legibility for both local residents and visitors, were explored.<sup>90</sup> Resident interviewees were also asked about how comfortable they felt in their environment, and what they did for leisure. They were asked whether they had a kin-relationship to their neighbours and if they could move to live in other neighbourhoods, if they wished to.<sup>91</sup> To gain an insight into everyday life in the city, and get a pictorial representation of the city, those residents were asked to draw two maps, one of their socio-spatial practices, and the other about of the image of the city; what Umm al-Fahem's spatially represented for them.<sup>92</sup>

In light of the wealth of material that the simple question of whether Umm al-Fahem is a city generated, and the simultaneous engagement in a process of reflection on data as it was being gathered, additional questions and additional methods needed to be deconstructed and pursued. This second stage of research, as I call it, corresponded to the city's social and political history. The questions that needed to be explored related, amongst other things, to major landmarks in the history of the city since 1949.

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<sup>90</sup> The (il)legibility of the city is important in revealing the extent of its accessibility and how spatial knowledge and orientation are organised; whether they are based on local, private and oral knowledge, or one which is legible and accessible to strangers independently of local and personalised knowledge.

<sup>91</sup> In some cases the question of kin-neighbours was almost unnecessary, as I could see that the interviewee's house was part of a complex that included first-degree relatives. On the question of moving between different neighbourhoods, and the movement from scene to scene, the Chicago school considers it a feature of the urban experience.

<sup>92</sup> This method was inspired by Kevin Lynch's (1991) methodology of investigating urban life and how people interact and conceive of their environment by using mental mapping. Unfortunately, because of questions to do with thesis' scope, the 54 amateur maps produced by resident-interviewees will not be included in the body of the thesis. However, their insightful information is incorporated into the body of the text, across the different data chapters.

Crudely speaking, this history included three main historical periods: the military government era 1949-1966, 1970s-1989, and 1989 onwards. Historical, political and sociological analysis of these different periods, as well as discourse analysis, was needed.<sup>93</sup>

What made the analysis more interesting was that urban matters, or the city's materiality, seemed to play a prime role in shaping the social and political history of the city. For example, they were among the most immediate reasons for the radical and defining transformation of the city's political and social landscape in 1989. They contributed to the demise of the communist-led local government and the rise of the Islamic Movement to power. Thereafter, they helped the latter maintain its hegemony in the city.

To be able to proceed with the analysis, and being keen to find historical documentation for the interviewees' narrative of the city's history, the field interviews had to be complemented by archival research. Therefore, the ethnographic work was followed by two-months worth of intensive work, digging through newspapers and magazine archives at two different universities in Israel: the university of Haifa and the Hebrew University's National Library. To make the task manageable, I had to identify the best and most accessible sources that could provide the relevant information. In cases where the search through newspapers was manual, either in the

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<sup>93</sup> Drawing on Foucault's (2002) understanding of discourse, discourse relates to a body of knowledge and statements that inform and guide the way one thinks about particular matters.

form of micro-films or physical papers, I had to limit the search to significant days and events in the history of Umm al-Fahem, as identified by the interviewees.

Because of the active role communists played in Umm al-Fahem, especially during the military government era, and their distinguished work in documenting the everyday life of Fahmawis, I examined the communist newspaper of *Al-Itihad*, which had reports written by Fahmawis on the conditions of their village at the time. *Al-Itihad*, founded in 1944 in the port city of Haifa, has been the communist mouthpiece in Arabic and the only non-establishment media outlet for Palestinian intellectuals at the time.<sup>94</sup> The newspaper was also used to gain an insight into the city's conditions when it was declared a city in November 1985, and the immediate years that followed until the 1989 elections.

For the second period in the history of the city, the 1970s and 1980s, in addition to *Al-Itihad* I searched through the available copies of *Al-Ghad* magazine that was also associated with the communist party. *Al-Ghad* magazine was particularly useful as it had an investigatory type of journalism. I also tried to get hold of *Abnaa el-Balad*'s (Sons of the Land) magazine of *Al-Hadaf*, which was particularly active in the 1980s. Unfortunately, there were no documented copies of it, neither public nor private. Although the archival research was mostly limited to the years up to 1989 and early 1990s, the years the research identifies as the formative years in the contemporary history of the city, I could not resist searching through the online archive of *Al-Itihad*, that was available through [www.aljabha.org](http://www.aljabha.org), and the only local

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<sup>94</sup> At first, *al-Itihad* was weekly, then bi-weekly and since 1983 became daily.



website [www.um-elfahem.net](http://www.um-elfahem.net), which seemed to be more associated with the Islamic Movement. The rationale behind the online search was to keep me up-to-date with the city's news.

The available archive copies of the Islamic Movement newspaper *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* were searched through for the period covering the years when the Islamic Movement won the elections in 1989 up until 1991.<sup>95</sup> The reason I chose those specific years was because the newspaper was first established in October 1989 ([www.sawt-alhaq.com](http://www.sawt-alhaq.com)) and it was within those early years in office that Movement's competence and high performativity in managing the city's affairs were most visible and striking compared to the crippled years of the predecessor communists. Those were certainly defining years in the current history of the city. As argued above, they also helped build up Fahmawis trust in the Movement, which ultimately contributed to establishing its biopolitical hegemonic government.

*Haaretz* daily newspaper archive and that of *Yediot Ahronot*, among the most widely read paper in Israel, both in Hebrew, were used as well, especially their coverage of key events in the history of the city. Searching through *Yediot Ahronot* was particularly easy to manage, as the search was computerised. All I needed to do was type 'Umm al-Fahem' in Hebrew and the search engine would find all the relevant articles about the city. Using Hebrew sources was particularly interesting as it provided room for discourse analysis, especially in relation to analysing statements

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<sup>95</sup> In 1991, *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* was closed down by the state for three months: June-September 1991 (<http://www.sawt-alhaq.com/web/pages/details.aspx?Id=2>) [Arabic].

made by voices from within the establishment in the way they viewed the Islamic Movement.

In relation to the new questions that needed to be explored, at the level of ordinary interviewees, these involved clarifications about two public urban sites in the city that seemed to represent the transformation in the local political map. These were Al-Meedan and Abu Oibaida's Mosque. The two sites were very different and respectively manifested the transition in the city's political landscape: before and after the Islamic Movement's landslide victory in the local government elections of 1989. Interviewees were asked what the two sites meant for them.

While in the field and thereafter, the ensuing process of digesting and analysing the body of material that emerged in the field along thematic lines, I realised that special attention had to be given to deconstructing the nature of the state in which the city and its residents resided and the relationship between them all. This work, that I later called Israel's colonial *nomos*, drew mostly on secondary resources and proved foundational for anchoring the case study. It also related directly to questions of structure and establishment as well as macro historical processes and how these shaped the (un)making of the city. A smaller literature review chapter on deconstructing the city and public space in general was also necessary to anchor the question of why the city and public space are used as tools of control and governmentality. The chapter on the city and public space preceded the chapter on Israel's *nomos*.

## **Interviewees and gatekeepers**

While in Umm al-Fahem more than 50 in-depth and a few snapshots interviews were conducted. These included 14 interviews with the local government planning department and local political leaders from across the political spectrum: communists, nationalists and the Islamic Movement. Among those interviewees were two previous mayors who represented two distinct periods in the history of the city as well two different political trends. The first was the mayor when Umm al-Fahem was declared a city in 1985 and was under the communist local government. I met and interviewed him at his home for about 3 hours. The second was the Islamic Movement elected mayor in 1989. He was interviewed at his office for a shorter time (about an hour), due to his tight schedule and public commitments as a national figure. Immediately after the interview he had to rush to the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab citizens of Israel meeting.<sup>96</sup>

As land and spatial planning policies constitute an important component at the structural level, a theme that was later reinforced by almost all the field interviewees, including the random ones, I thought it was essential to interview the local government planning department. After conducting an initial research, I found out that the local government had a department for strategic planning. The next expected step was to contact the department. I phoned the strategic planner office to introduce both the research project and myself and check if an interview with him would be possible. Luckily and without hesitation he agreed to meet. After meeting for the first

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<sup>96</sup> For more information about the committee see their website: <http://www.arab-lac.org> [Arabic].

time, he kindly introduced me to the city's architect and the person in charge of road planning and transport in the city. All of the three valuable contacts were generous with me. I interviewed them at length on a number of occasions. For the interviews I used a semi structured as well as a more tailored approach. The manager of the city's Economic Firm for Development, an auxiliary to the local government, who is in charge of the 'build your home' project was interviewed too.<sup>97</sup>

After forging a trustful relationship with members of the department, and as it happened on the same day I had an interview with the town planner, I was allowed to observe an internal ad hoc emergency meeting convened at the department of planning, pertaining to the pressing issue of house and commercial premises demolitions. The meeting included representatives from the local government, the popular committee for the defence of land and recent victims of demolitions. The department also subsequently provided me with internal documents related to planning in the city. To visualise and deepen my understanding of the city's planning and urban development, I also joined the city's engineer who led national professionals concerned with conservation for an informative tour of the city.

The rest of the interviews were largely with random people whom I met either in the streets of the old city, the art gallery, coffeeshops, restaurants, on informal public transport, in informal social places, such as shops, public squares and at the main entrance to the city. The interviews lasted from one hour to four hours, or five to ten minutes, if they were conducted on the move while using public transport or in places

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<sup>97</sup> The 'build your home' project is explored in chapter 6 on land and spatial planning.

that allowed only brief encounters. Those who became main collaborators were interviewed more than once, with each interview lasting a good few hours. In regard to the interviewees' identities, a balance of age, gender, women with and without *hijab* and people with disabilities, was sought. While the research recognises the importance of such identities, they do not form a major part of the analysis. The research is concerned more with how Fahmawis experience their city, not how their different identities and subjectivities inform their experiences of the city.

10 local artists involved in theatre, poetry, creative writing, painting, sculpting and music were interviewed to investigate, as well as the core questions of the research, the state of art in the city and the challenges artists face.<sup>98</sup> The first contact with two of them was coincidental; one in his musical instruments store and the other while walking in the streets of the city. The latter, who during the day worked as a fishmonger and in the evening pursued his passion for theatre, took on the role of a gatekeeper after I had built a trustful relationship with him. He recommended many other artists, and later invited me to attend, as an observer, one of their internal meetings that discussed how they could develop their theatre work. Another artist, who became one of the main gatekeepers and collaborators with whom I spent hours learning about the city, its art and politics, was also key in introducing me to other

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<sup>98</sup> While in the field, and upon encountering a number of artists, I thought I should write a chapter on art and artists in the city. This stemmed from the belief that having an art scene in a city was distinctively urban. I was happy to see that Umm al-Fahem had a relatively good number of artists. These, however, worked more within individual initiatives. Although the city hosts the nationally renowned gallery, Galleria, there was no art scene as such. For the local artists, the gallery catered more for Israeli Jewish and international artists and was more oriented to attract an Israeli Jewish audience. The gallery's manager denied the artists' allegation. Due to thesis scope and pressing time for completion, I decided to drop the chapter, which I wanted to call artists without art.

artists and writers in the city. He became a reference point and made himself available for phone interviews whenever needed when I was back in London.

Other informal quick interviews, or snapshots interviews as sociologist Claire Alexander (Kim 2011) calls them, took place with individuals, many of whom were not from the city, when opportunities arose. These interviews took place while on the move: in shuttles in Umm al-Fahem, in a taxi to Tel Aviv, in the Art Gallery, or with locals from my own town. The Art Gallery was an attraction for some Israeli Jews, some of whom had never visited the city before. Those visitors were asked what Umm al-Fahem represented for them.

For recording the interviews, I used a digital recorder, except when asked not to by the interviewee. In order to make sure everything said was recorded and written down, in case something went wrong with technology, I always made sure to write the interviews down, as they were taking place. The written notes produced a total of 711 A4-size hand-written pages, transcribed by hand in large script, and three A5 notebooks, all in Arabic. Most days, upon returning from the field, I kept a diary of events, observations, quotes and thoughts of the day.

To provide an academic justification for two of my prime methods of choice, ethnography and photography, and to translate my unarticulated sentiments about the importance of photography in research, in what follows I provide a detailed account of their methodological and analytical contribution to research.

## **Why ethnography? Why visual?**

“Can the subaltern speak?” asked Gayatri Spivak in 1988. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s understanding of the subaltern class, Spivak, by using the subaltern she referred to the oppressed, subordinated and marginalised section of society, especially those who were subjected to colonialism for a long period. So how could this be applied to Umm al-Fahem? This research problematises and challenges established knowledge. It is concerned with critically and qualitatively deconstructing the nominality and abstractness of Umm al-Fahem’s status as a city in order to form an understanding of the Palestinian city as experienced by its residents and the actors involved in its (un)making. Through addressing the lived experience of Umm-el-Fahem’s residents, as well as the material and structural conditions that shape it, the research investigates the nature of the transition from a village into a city. Therefore, the research had to adopt methods that adequately corresponded to its needs, questions, case study, and the context under which it was taking place.

As discussed in the previous section, the research methods were not decided upon in the abstract, but had to concretely relate to the subject of research. The substantive part of the research is predicated mostly on Fahmawis’ perspective and socio-spatial experiences of their city. It gives voice to agency and is concerned with their own reading and understanding of their city. Such urban subjectivities would have been difficult to capture in a few pages of a questionnaire. It is within this framework that the research is ethnographic and employs combined qualitative methods in addressing the case study.

## **Genealogy of ethnographic practice**

Before delving into the critical contribution of urban ethnography to the understanding of cities, especially those who reside in their margins, I trace the genealogy of ethnographic research and introduce some of the theoretical problems which accompanied much of its historical development. Ethnographic research has historically been associated with anthropology, which together with other disciplines, such as geography, trace their genealogy back to colonial and imperial projects. It was at the beginning of the colonial era that anthropology established itself as “a distinctive discipline” (Asad 1973: 14). By making claims to neutrality, objectivity and empiricism that produced accounts of non-European cultures and ways of being, anthropology was complicit in justifying and buttressing the racial supremacist project of colonial domination. Defining itself as “the study of primitive societies” (Asad 1973: 11), anthropology served to consolidate rather than contest the colonial project by helping construct, objectify, hierarchise, classify and represent the non-European other as primitive, uncivilised and exotic.

In the mid nineteenth century, anthropology became institutionalised through the formation of anthropological and ethnological societies. The main intellectual objective behind the formation of those European and American societies as Davies (1999:68) argues was “to collect information about other cultures and ‘races’ which were being brought into Euro-American consciousness...” with an “...emphasis on collecting and cataloguing...either to trace historical diffusion of specific customs and institutions or to establish the evolutionary course of various social and cultural forms...” In imperial Germany, for example, as Zimmerman (2001:1) notes anthropology “functioned as a new antihumanist worldview.”



Throughout the colonial era, the discipline's "efforts were devoted to a description and analysis - carried out by Europeans, for a European audience - of non-European societies dominated by European power" (Asad 1973: 15). By possessing the privilege to produce and author knowledge about the other, ethnographers reproduced the unequal power relations between dominating European and dominated non-European cultures. In those accounts, the colonised and the subaltern did not represent themselves. They were represented. As Asad put it, "...anthropology is ...rooted in an unequal power encounter that gives the West access to cultural and historical information about societies it has progressively dominated, and thus not only generates a certain kind of universal understanding, but also reinforces the inequalities between the European and the non-European worlds..." (ibid: 16). Culture in such anthropological accounts and discourses operated to "enforce separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 138).

The research methods and approaches employed in the study of natives progressively underwent changes in the early decades of the twentieth century. Bronislaw Malinowski in Britain and Franz Boas in the US advocated a fieldwork based on long term participant observation of the people being studied. "Both had come to recognize the complexity of the so called 'primitive' and to link this with both an attack on cultural evolutionism and a deep and genuine opposition to ethnocentrism" (Davies 1999: 69). For Malinowski (1922) spending time with the natives and maintaining everyday interaction with them was invaluable. For him ethnography was about grasping "the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of the world."

However, a major shift in ethnographic work occurred with the development of the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s and 1930s, with a major emphasis on urban ethnography in Western cities. Although some urban historians, e.g. Sanjek (2000:108-9) trace urban ethnography to Engels' 1844 *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, and Du Bois' 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro* with their special attention to power relations, it was the Chicago School that ushered in a new development in the study of urban environment. For Robert E. Park, a prominent figure in the Chicago School, ethnographic methods were the most suitable for the study of the marginalised in urban environment.

Prior to the School's work and establishment, ethnographic urban studies as Jacobs (1993: 828) notes were "more appropriate in the context of the Third World city than the Western city," which she sees as "a product of the tendency to anthropologise the exotic 'other'"(ibid). Interestingly, early ethnographic studies of Western cities reproduced the same approach towards the non-western other. Jacobs, drawing on Hannerz (1980), Jackson (1985) and Atkinson (1990) notes that such studies remained within the confines of investigating the exotic other; the ghetto, the poor, the deviant, the ethnic and racial sub groups. Hannerz (1980: 2) described the shift as an "undignified scramble to find substitute savages in slums" of the Western cities (quoted in Jacobs 1993: 828).

The abundance of ethnographic studies, however, was mostly "in the city, rather than of the city" (Jackson 1985:171, quoted in Jacobs ibid). Such studies lacked a clear relationship or engagement with social theory and macro processes which linked the case study to bigger structural processes, particularly those pertaining to the political economy of cities. The 1970s witnessed another turn that sought to challenge

preceding positivist research frameworks. Radical experimental ethnographies emerged seeking “a bottom-up reformulation of key theoretical concerns within political economy accounts of the city” (Marcus 1986, quoted *ibid*).

In those years, more critical voices, mainly those associated with the Marxist school of thought, became vocal against the culturist, unreflective approach to urban studies. Culturist discourses assumed that “culture is self-evident and unproblematic category that can be used to explain people’s behaviour. Culture is given casual powers, and people are said to do things *because of* their culture” (Jackson 1989: 29 [original emphasis]). Manuel Castells’ 1977 book *The Urban Question*, and David Harvey’s 1973 *Social Justice and the City* were both critical of the descriptive culturist approach of the Chicago School, advocating instead more attention to a materialist analysis of cities and structural processes which shape cities and space. The British cultural studies with its interest in critically engaging with researching questions of race, ethnicities, urban social movements, and resistance within urban settings, e.g. Hall, Critcher’s et al 1978 *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, and Gilroy’s 1987 *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, further radicalised qualitative approaches to the study of cities.

In recent years, photo-ethnographies, the likes of Bourgois and Schonberg’s 2009 *righteous dopefiend* on the Edgewater homeless and heroin addicts of San Francisco, and Mitchell Duneier’s 2001 collaborative book *Sidewalk* on the struggle for survival of African-American second hand book and magazine vendors on a sidewalk of the affluent Greenwich Village - Sixth Avenue in New York, have followed the critical tradition in ethnography. Bourgois and Schonberg challenged what they called “community-based studies of exotic and dehistoricized others in a vacuum of external

power relations” (2009: 14). Through their research they sought to “clarify the relationship between large-scale power forces and intimate ways of being in order to explain why the United States, the wealthiest nation in the world, has emerged as a pressure cooker for producing destitute addicts embroiled in everyday violence” (ibid: 5).

Not only did their research challenge the theoretical binary distinction between structure and agency, it was also innovative in its methods. They both incorporated photography to illustrate and argue their cases. In *Sidewalk*, Duneier (2001) sought to illuminate how race and class operated in an urban setting and how those in positions of power such as the police, Business Improvement Districts, business owners and politicians as well as society at large attempted to rid public spaces of the disadvantaged and outcast whom it had a hand in producing. He gives voice and agency to the sidewalk vendors, the homeless and panhandlers who were trying to make “an honest living,” in a society engulfed by racial and class exclusion and stigmatisation (2001: 313).

In linking the micro to the macro, Duneier wrote, “I certainly want the reader to know that the lives of the people on Sixth Avenue are engendered, sustained, and/or complicated by social forces” (2001: 344). For him ethnographers who “shy away from analysis of constraints and opportunities because they cannot be sustained with hard evidence...will leave the inaccurate impression that the manifest behaviors are self-generated” (ibid).

## **What is ethnography?**

So what is ethnography then and why is it most suitable for my research? Ethnography is a “social research based on close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do” (Wacquant 2003: 5). It addresses issues around perspectives and how people see and understand their world (Becker 1996; Marvasti 2004). It investigates “the view point of those studied” and is about “learning and understanding the meaning people give to their world and experiences instead of making them up” (Becker 1996: 59, 61). It also allows for the understanding of the everyday life, the quotidian. In addition to providing an in-depth insight into city life, residents’ spatialities and their daily experiences, ethnography also problematises accepted knowledge. It challenges it by bringing to the fore the accounts of ordinary residents who are the ones who know best about their lived conditions and the happenings in the city. It gives room and voice to their subjectivities.

Moreover, and in contrast to quantitative methods, ethnography allows flexibility and fluidity in the field, and gives room for unexpected and unplanned data. It allows the project to organically develop in a trajectory which could be different to that initially thought of. It does not brush aside complexities that emerge in the field. It tries to understand them. On the unexpected data which emerge in ethnographic projects, and in contrast with other methods, Becker (1996) writes, “...the situations of data gathering present fieldworkers, whether they seek it or not, with a lot of information, whether they want it or not. If you do a survey, you know in advance all the

information you can acquire. There may be some surprises in the connections between the items you measure, but there will not be any surprise data... A partial exception to this might be the use of open-ended questions, but even such questions are usually not asked in such a way as to encourage floods of unanticipated data suggesting new variables. In fact the actual workings of survey organisations discourage interviewers from recording data not asked for on the forms” (ibid 56).

Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) recognise additional values that win ethnography a preferential status. For them “[p]articipant-observation...has an inherently anti-institutional transgressive potential because, by definition, it forces academics out of their ivory tower and compels them to violate the boundaries of class and cultural segregation” (2009:14). Duneier (2001) in acknowledgment of the advantages of participant observation, recognises that it was thanks to this method more than interviews that he gained the bulk of his data. In the context of his research and social and class position as an upper-middle-class male academic writing about poor black men and women who belonged to some of the most disadvantaged and stigmatised sections of society; and in recognition of the nature of the racialised society at stake, as well as questions of trust which result from it, participant observation gained him a better understanding of their life. “[I]n the United States, blacks and whites often speak differently when they are among people of their own race than when they are in the presence of members of another race. As a white person, it would be naïve for me to believe that the things blacks will say to me are the same as they would say to a black researcher,” he wrote (2001: 352).

As far as my research project is concerned, other additional aspects pertaining to the research and its context win ethnography a preferential status. Although the research

is principally concerned with the urban question, hence it is an urban ethnography, it is also situated in multiple settings which require a particular attention to the national identity of those who are studied. Zureik (2003), in his article ‘Theoretical and Methodological Considerations for the Study of Palestinian Society,’ discusses why ethnographic approaches are among the most favourable methods to the study of Palestinians, who are “a society in conflict and transition” (ibid: 152). His advocacy follows on from his analysis of the fragmented reality or the multiple lives as Edward Said (1986) had called it, and the different socio-politico and economic conditions the Palestinians had to experience after the Nakba of 1948.

Situating the Palestinians in a wider Arab context, where people live under oppressive regimes and where the public has been marginalised as far as shaping public opinion is concerned, quantitative methods which include responding to a questionnaire interview proves irrelevant. Zureik (2003: 153) argues that such a method assumes a relationship of trust between the researcher and the interviewees and that the latter opinion counts as far as public life and influence on the course of events is concerned. Under conditions of lack of trust there is a tendency to look with suspicion towards those who conduct “individual-based information”. Therefore quantitative methods prove difficult to pursue. In contrast, qualitative methods such as ethnography and oral history, especially in the Palestinian case, have played a role in giving voice and agency, thanks to their ability to “capture subjectivities and nuances of the phenomenon under investigation” (ibid: 154).

However, ethnography, particularly photo-ethnography does not go unchallenged. While in the field, researchers have to constantly engage in a reflective process. Reflexivity includes thoughts about their research, their work and power relations in

the field, the risks involved in regarding their own safety and those who are researched, and the integrity of those researched, specially when those belong to an ostracised, socially excluded and vulnerable section of society. Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) whose photo-ethnography spanned over a decade documenting and researching the daily struggle for survival of homeless heroin and crack addicts on the streets of San Francisco and the structural forces that shaped the addicts' lives, offer a valuable insight into the challenges and ethical questions which arise from this type of research. For them ethnography, especially participant observation, "is by definition an intensely subjective process requiring systematic self-reflection" (ibid: 11). Therefore, they recognise the importance of the recourse to fact-checked official records, public archives and newspaper articles to confirm the accuracy of accounts of past events (ibid: 12).

In their case, another set of challenges regarded the integrity of the addicts and their fear of objectifying them. Also they had to set the norms of conduct and the boundaries of privacy between them and the Edgewater homeless and manage the imminent threat to their safety in the form of police harassment and law enforcement. "The question of personal privacy of our research subjects is more complicated than the immediate practical risk of legal sanctions against them, however. It involves the imperative to respect personal dignity and to avoid essentializing difference" (ibid: 9). While Bourgois and Schonberg were cautious not to jeopardise the safety and integrity of the Edgewater homeless, and said they would have immediately stopped the research if their research participants were at risk of arrest, the latter gave Schonberg the permission to photograph them in what could be their most intimate and undignified moments. They also encouraged them to use their real names. The



Edgewater homeless saw this as part of their struggle for respect and visibility. They “do not want to be treated as public secrets or hidden subjects of shame. They struggle for self-respect and feel that their stories are worth telling” (ibid).

### **Why the visual?**

Edward Said (1986), in *After the Last Sky*, which incorporates photographs taken by Jean Muhr (a photographer who for decades had documented Palestinians lives), pledges researchers who are concerned with the question of Palestine to make use of whatever method available for them in their study of Palestinians. In my case, I am passionate about photography. While acknowledging some of its disadvantages, which I will discuss later, I believe in its powerful role in conveying messages about the quotidian and the mundane, the larger socio-economic and politico context, and in providing material evidence, especially when accompanied by and/or embedded in a written text. This role becomes even more powerful and crucial in contested and politically charged sites, where a battle over existence, narrative and legitimacy constitutes part of the context in which photography is taking place. It is against this background that I have engaged in a long-term personal commitment to documenting Palestinians’ everyday lives, and their vanishing and changing cultural practices. This is a feeling that has grown stronger since I moved to London and transgresses the scope of this research.

Methodologically and analytically, in a research context that spans over a period of time covering more than a year, photographs could also serve the function of aide memoir. They could act as a reference tool for years to come in retrieving even the smallest details of the ethnographic experience. Moreover, serving as a data-

gathering tool (Collier & Collier 1986), visual images also help guide my analysis of the materiality of the city and its socio-political order. Therefore, their organisational and analytical value could form an important part in the writing up and analysis of the research.

In my case for years after the first stage of fieldwork was completed – including conducting interviews with locals, and photographing the city’s materiality – the photographs continued to play an invaluable role in helping me analyse the semiotics of the city’s public space and fill the gap of missed data. Photographs offered theoretical and analytical possibilities, and helped construct arguments, when direct interviews about certain topics were not covered in the first stage of research. Because it was easy to manage, without involving coordinating with people, the camera was of great help. To retrieve knowledge retrospectively, it allowed me to perform quick and efficient visits to the city whenever I was in Israel and to take photos of signs and scenes I had seen while conducting ethnographic work, but did not take photos of at the time. This was particularly helpful in trying to analyse public signs, including religious signs, and to pose questions about the social and political order that was being produced (see chapter 7 on religious identities).

### **The general in the particular: helping develop theoretical possibilities**

“Seeing comes before words...” wrote John Berger (2008). However, “[l]etting a picture speak its thousand words can result in a thousand deceptions,” if it is viewed on its own and out of context (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009: 14, 9). “[E]mbedding the photograph in the text allows an appreciation of the effects of social structural forces on individuals” (ibid: 9). Their “rich possibilities” as Stuart Hall notes in his

preface to Gilroy's visual book *Black Britain: A Photographic History* (2007), "not only record what happened but...set people, places and events in a wider social and political context" (ibid: 5). The potential of visual images lies beyond their instrumentality. They illustrate the "general in the particular" (Knowles and Sweetman 2004: 7) and bring "into visibility aspects of social life which are beyond or behind the headlines" (Gilroy 2007: 7). They are "designed to make us ask questions. What do the images tell us about the black experience?" (ibid: 8). While the lives of black Britons are different to those in Umm al-Fahem, the gist of the idea of bringing those in the margins into visibility, as well as the investigative and interrogative properties which visual images present could be universal.<sup>99</sup>

Visual images complement and provide a physical form to the written text and work as adjuncts to telling and demonstrating the ethnographic experience. They also operate as evidence and representations of reality. For Harper (1988: 61-62), while not all sociological data can be photographically captured, in the field of social and environmental ecology and social interactions the camera plays a superior role to the human eye or the written word: "the camera can gather information that cannot be gathered with the human eye or other recording devices." The visual as Marvasti (2004: 71) puts it "becomes part data, part illustration, and part analysis."

Knowles and Sweetman (2004) reject what they call "the naive realism which suggests that images – photographic or otherwise – simply re-present objective and already existing realities." They argue that images have theoretical, analytical and

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<sup>99</sup> For Suchar (1997:34), the "interrogatory principle" of a photograph is what makes it documentary.

conceptual possibilities. They have the “capacity to allow for the development of theoretical insight or understanding” and “to reveal what is hidden in the inner mechanisms of the ordinary and the taken for granted” (Knowles and Sweetman 2004: 6,7). They “help ‘place’ or ‘ground’ sociological discourse and add another dimension to the arguments” pursued in the research (ibid: 3). Visual methods that “capture the particular, the local, the personal and the familiar” are particularly apt to develop what Mills referred to as the sociological imagination which “links the larger historical and social scenes in which lives are set with individual experience and biography” (ibid: 8, 7). They offer a way into understanding how the personal is social and political and vice versa.

### **Power, surveillance, control and other challenges**

Taking photographs does not go uncontested, whether in relation to the subjectivities of the photographer him/herself, the claims to objectivity, the representations images create, or issues of the personal security of those photographed. Potentially, visual images could be fraught with tension. Arguments around marrying or reconciling the objectivity of the camera with the subjective eye of its operator, and where to draw the line are inevitable. Photography is an instrument of creation, writes Hall (1997: 81). The camera, however automatic, remains a tool that is “highly sensitive to the attitudes of its operator” (Collier & Collier (1986: 9). “What produces the right moment?’... or ... ‘what produces moments dense with meaning?’” (Flaes and Harper 1993: 214), could be a dilemma facing photographers.

Despite such challenges, for Susan Sontag (2003: 26), the objective and the subjective do not work as binary features. They are rather to the advantage of photography. For

her: “[p]hotographs had the advantage of uniting two contradictory features. Their credentials of objectivity were inbuilt. Yet they always had, necessarily, a point of view. They were a record of the real – incontrovertible, as no verbal account, however impartial, could be – since a machine was doing the recording. And they bore witness to the real – since a person had been there to take them” (ibid).

The challenging point, however, is the issue of the security of the subjects and objects of photography and their instrumental relationship to power, surveillance and control. John Tagg (1988) in his collection of essays *The Burden of Representation*, Ariella Azoulay’s (2008) book *The Civil Contract of Photography*, and Douglas Harper (1988) recognise the power of photography and its complicit role in enforcing control, surveillance and observation at the hands of the state. Azoulay notes that photographers and photography were rapidly co-opted by the sovereign power to document, collect and classify data for law enforcement and other governmental duties (2008: 133). Harper, in taking the argument further, argues that documentary photography also has the potential to expose social problems, and even destabilise a regime (1988: 56- 57).

I would add that, depending on the social and political context, photography is also about political control, surveillance and intimidation that sometimes risks personal security and livelihood. By its intimidating documentary power, photography is recruited as tool that helps create docile bodies. When I was in the field, photography generated resistance on the part of a few people in Umm al-Fahem, who wondered about the purpose behind taking photographs. Their reservations were grounded in the concrete reality of the state’s potential persecution and criminalisation of politically

active individuals. The following anecdote illustrates and visualises best such concerns and reservation.

In July 2009, while conducting my ethnographic work, I attended a demonstration against house demolition in the city. The demonstration was a joint initiative of activist women of Jewish and Palestinian origins and took place at the main entrance to the city. Despite being peaceful and non-threatening, the demonstration was video-recorded by a plainclothes security officer. As the camera was an integral part of my fieldwork, I always made sure I had it on me. As I was taking photos of the demonstration, I happened to see the plainclothes security officer, oscillating between the two sides of the main road, holding a video camera in his hand, trying to take a comprehensive shoot of all those who were present. Wearing a gun on his waist gave the clear indication that he belonged to security forces. The photos below “State surveillance in action” are testimonial to Fahmawis’ feelings on how photography speaks to power and is used as an instrument for intimidation and control.

## State surveillance in action



Figure 5: A joint demonstration of Palestinian and Jewish women at the entrance of Umm al-Fahem against house demolition in the city, 11 July 2009



Figure 6: Plainclothes security officer filming the demonstration



Figure 7: Plainclothes security officer, with a pistol on his waist, crossing Wadi Ara Road to film women standing on the other side of the road. 11 July 2009





Figure 8: Same plainclothes security officer filming demonstrating women across the road who are in figure 9



Figure 9: the shadow of women demonstrating on the other side of the road, opposite city's entrance.

To conclude, however subjective visual methods are and while it is important to reflect on the matter and that of security I believe that their advantages override the disadvantages, especially when documentary photos are at stake and where no editing and staging is involved. This is particularly important when the research is concerned with the socio-spatiality of a city and its residents. As discussed earlier, and in reiterating Collier & Collier (1986: 17, 15) argument, the camera is a good tool for grasping the ecology and cultural geography of the case study. As Harper (1988: 58) puts it: “the camera records spatial relations more efficiently than a written description.”

Despite the argument that, “the camera, the tape recorder, and the written word are technologies that have historically lent themselves to surveillance and social engineering,” they are also technologies of solidarity (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009: 14). People who are being photographed in their lived environment, whether in *righteous dopefiend*, *Sidewalk* or Umm-el-Fahem, recognise the importance of having their socio-spatial environment and voices heard and documented. They perceive it as part of the struggle to win recognition and to expose the macro socio-political and economic forces which shape their very condition.

## Conducting a research in politicised (post)colonial contexts: Reflections, positionality and information sources

“You must be *tajjammu3*,” said one of the interviewees.<sup>100</sup> Reluctant to expose my political identity, I immediately asked: “what made you think I’m *tajjammu3*?” “Your glasses,” he said. “What do you mean? Could you be more explicit?” I asked. “You know what I mean, it’s the intellectual look,” he said. “I’m afraid, as a researcher I should not and cannot reveal what my political ideology is,” I answered.<sup>101</sup> His assumption about my political affiliation and the attempt to fit me within one category was an important question I had to reflect upon throughout the fieldwork. This was particularly important for two reasons. The first was pertaining to the city’s highly politicised history. The second reason, which also derives from the first, was because of the Islamisation of the city’s political and social scene. Women’s bodies and wearing the *hijab*, in the context of the city’s politics, were identity markers. In some cases, though not all and not always, wearing a *hijab*, especially amongst young women, was an informal declaration of being a supporter of the Islamic Movement. However, reflecting on my perceived political identity based on gender and sartorial practices was not the only concern.

While in the field, I was constantly stimulated and at times overwhelmed with unexpected information, which left me with a state of dissonance, bewilderment and excitement. Many of the interviewees were constantly engaged in deconstructing and

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<sup>100</sup> *Tajjammu3* or as known by its Hebrew acronym Balad: National Democratic Assembly, is a political party set up in 1995 by Palestinian intellectuals from within Israel and was for years headed by Dr Azmi Bshara. The conceived image of members of Al-Tajjammu3 is that they are intellectuals and the new emerging Palestinian middle class in Israel.

<sup>101</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 24 June 2009.

reconstructing the socio-political history of the city. Sooner or later, and without any guidance or hints from me, they would start talking about the shift in the political map of the city: before and after 1989. 1989 was the year that ushered in a new era in the city's political map that had ramifications on the city's social and spatial order. Before 1989, the communist-led were in power and ran its local government. After 1989, the communists were defeated and the Islamic Movement was voted in. When talking about the 1989 shift, interviewees would also talk about the state and its role in tipping the balance of power and bringing about the weakening of the communists and growth of the Islamic Movement. The fieldwork opened a completely new avenue that needed further investigation and added a new thread to the argument, which was not thought of before.

At the beginning, I felt I was being diverted off the main topic of establishing whether Umm al-Fahem was a city or not. The unexpected data left me grappling with the question of how to incorporate it into the project in a coherent way which would give voice to interviewees' experiences and would form a coherent argument. I remember, calling my supervisor while in the field asking for advice. I shared with him my thrilled, if confused, feelings about the new but challenging material that seemed to deserve an entirely new PhD project.

It took me about two years of thinking and reflection on the field material and the other data I managed to collect to figure out that what first seemed to be distracting and off the subject was in fact connected and directly linked to the main question. I realised that the city's very materiality and the promotion of identity politics were at the centre of this political change and the new power configurations. Moreover, I reached a conclusion that determining in a definite way whether Umm al-Fahem was

a city was almost irrelevant. The new questions that needed to be addressed were: what can be made of the Palestinian city in Israel? And what kind of spatial configuration and socio-political and cultural order are being produced and why? Based on the ethnographic ground research and the foundational chapters I have written, before long and without any previous plans or intentions, I found myself engaged in an organic process of theorisation and conceptualisation of the Palestinian city.

In the theorisation process, the state's role behind this political change needed to be addressed. However, going about unravelling the state's meddling with the city's politics and its deliberate policy towards weakening the communists and enhancing the performance of the Islamic Movement made the task difficult and generated anxiety and concerns. This was for the simple reason that the research was not about the Islamic Movement or the communists per se. Moreover, concerns about being biased towards one side over the other was definitely a source of worry, even if I had nothing to do with getting interviewees talking about this.

To address these concerns, interviewees' accounts were not enough to make a strong objective argument, in such a politically-charged context. This is especially important in the context of a highly respected Islamic Movement that had won the trust of many people. Consulting the Movement's newspaper and its mouthpiece *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih*, as well as providing official state statistics in regard to the local authority's budgets before and after 1989, seemed the best way to provide the objective evidence for the interviewees' account. This was also accompanied by performing discourse analysis in relation to statements made by state officials in regard to the Movement. Moreover, following interviewees' recommendations, I

reviewed the 1976 Koenig policy report made by Yisrael Koenig, the Northern District police commissioner. The report provides insights into the state's concerns about the increasing popularity of the communist party in the 1970s and the need therefore to weaken it.

### **My inquiring gaze: observations and revelations**

The ethnographic experience was not limited to interviews and data collected through them. It was also about my own journey into the city, its activities and events, my inquiring gaze, impressions and observations of it, its people, events, streets, mobility, buildings, architecture, rhythms, signs and billboards and how telling these are about the city. It was about not taking for granted the socio-spatiality of the city, its history, its politics and its built-environment. While in the field, I walked through back and main streets, the market, its different neighbourhoods, particularly the Mahajnih neighbourhood in the heart of the old part of the city, parts of the Mahameed and Jabareen neighbourhoods and the Ighbariyih-Mahajnih crossroad. I felt and sensed the buzz in town. I also took photographs of things I thought were worth photographing.

From an urban sociological standpoint, strolling through the streets made it clearer to me how the issue of anonymity in the city, the question of heterogeneity, otherness and difference barely existed. While locals were not intrusive, but welcoming and warm, with spending time in the city I became easily recognisable, to the extent that a year after I finished my fieldwork, and while staying in a hotel in Aqabah – Jordan - where some Fahmawis happened to be, I heard women walking past me, pointing to me and wondering out loud if I was the same woman who a year earlier was in their city.

With strolling and walking came the inevitable knowledge of the city, confirming Simmel's argument that strangers in the city get to know it more than its local residents. One of my collaborators, who was of great help to me and who made both herself and her car available, was impressed by my sense of direction in the city and how I could navigate my way through the least expected places. "You know more places than me," she said. I would not say and claim I know more than her, as the city is not organised in an easily legible way for strangers. Spatial knowledge is very vernacular and personalised. Streets have no names and even when they do, they are not recognised as such by locals. I found this in itself interesting and revealing about the nature and order of the city. One of the women I met, who has been working in the city for a number of years, complained that she did not know many parts of the city, especially the old labyrinth-like part. I would, however, say that I became familiar with the city, its streets, rhythms, senses and smells because I was interested and made the effort to do so.

### **The camera: observations and revelations**

Reflecting on my experience in the field, the camera as a visible tool of research proved to have its social, political, public/private and ethnicised identity. It gave cues about the social and political make-up of the city, thus helping with the analysis of the ethnographic experience and the city. Taking photographs could not be detached from the political, religious and cultural norms of the city. The reactions I received while taking photos, with people shouting from their cars, 'the journalist,' 'the photographer,' made me think how the camera in the local context, apart from serving journalistic purposes, has a private identity and is used more for private purposes: weddings and domestic occasions.

In Umm al-Fahem, the camera in its public identity as a documentation tool of the urban environment and social life seemed to have been associated with ethnic backgrounds other than Arab. It invoked interest that sometimes was blended with fear and suspicion. Some locals thought I was not Palestinian. Their impression made me reflect on the essence of what a city means, if being different is very visible and evokes interest among its residents and if taking photographs is very ethnicised. While walking the streets of the city, especially when taking photographs, I was approached by people of different ages speaking in Hebrew. Kids would greet me with Shalom, just as I and my friends used to do when we were at their age when encountering people in the village who did not look like Arabs.<sup>102</sup> Often these kids, when I greeted them back in Arabic, would immediately ask me to take photos of them and some would ask if I was a Muslim or a Christian.

Other times, when taking photographs of public spaces, signs, or graffiti, which I thought were public and therefore neutral, I was stopped and asked in Hebrew why I was taking photos. Yet again the suspicious attitude would wash away and turn into curiousness, the second I spoke in Arabic with a local accent. When taking close-up shoots of workshops, for example, I did ask the permission of people in advance, to dispel the why and what questions, which have their roots in the particular political reality under which Fahmawis and many Palestinians in Israel live. The reality is that of state harassment, racism and securitisation. In Umm al-Fahem, as in other Palestinian localities, there are unauthorised buildings and houses, which are threatened with demolition.

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<sup>102</sup> For us as kids being foreign was being Jewish. Shalom is the Hebrew word for hello.



Other reasons for why some Fahmawis were reluctant to be photographed could have been because of security reasons (see figures above) or simply because people did not like being photographed. It could have been related to the conservative culture of the city, especially when it involved women. Apart from these incidents, people were keen to get their environment and themselves photographed, especially when I told them it was for research purposes. Their agreement, and in some cases encouragement to take photos, seemed like a political commitment on their side and a tacit recognition of the importance of getting the condition of their urban environment communicated.

### **Methodological, contextual and positional challenges**

In addition to the challenges deriving from managing field data, there are three other sets of challenges that seem to be separate but are in fact interconnected. One set is methodological and relates to the production of objective knowledge in a context of a qualitative urban ethnographic research. The second is contextual and corresponds to challenges emanating from conducting a research project about and in a city that is embedded in multiple power structures and is under (post)colonial conditions. The third challenge relates to my multiple identities.

As far as ethnographic research is concerned, the task of producing objective research that is conducted in a highly politicised context, without compromising field interviewees' accounts of their experiences and views of their city, becomes a challenge that requires further investigation. As discussed earlier, to avoid a situation where the research would be dismissed for being too subjective and critical, I had to consult additional sources and use additional methods. Archival research of

newspaper and magazines articles, official statistics, official statements as quoted by nationally recognised newspapers, and official master plans, as well as taking photographs of the city's materiality and signs, were all mobilised to help cross-check events narrated by interviewees and to provide external evidence to their arguments and accounts.

By questions of context, I refer to the multiple contexts in which the case study is embedded, the complexities that arise from their (post)colonial characteristics and my own positionality in relation to these contexts.<sup>103</sup> One context relates to Umm al-Fahem itself and its character, or in other words the research being conducted in the city itself. In this context, my personal multiple identities: academic, gendered and cultural, become part of the challenge. Some of those challenges pertain to what sometimes feel like the binary nature of the city; being a political hub and home for religious and secular nationalist, political movements.

In the context of an Islamised public space and Islamised bodies, the challenge lay in the fact that I do not wear the *hijab* and therefore, by default, could be judged as belonging to a secular political movement and as such could be perceived as representing a secular trend. The potential challenge here is to what extent the different political voices are equally represented in the research and to what extent interviewees felt comfortable with expressing their opinions. In answer to this, the research does not attempt to represent any political tendency. It does, nevertheless,

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<sup>103</sup> See introduction chapter, footnote number 38, on what is meant by postcoloniality.

aim to reflect the stories and voices that emerged from the field. And that some of my interviewees were active supporters of the Movement.

The second context relates to the question of the state that the city, or in the other words to the fact that the research is about the city under (post)colonial conditions and the structural and political forces that shape it. Here again my multiple identities come into question in regard to the associated tensions between their different components. The tension arose in relation to my researcher and national identities, being a researcher who belongs to the larger subaltern researched group and being critical of the state's (urban) policies towards this group. The tension brings into question issues around subjectivity and objectivity of the research, and requires a special attention when criticism of Israel is at stake.

This concern is not mine alone. Academics who are engaged in critical research share it as well. Edward Said (1992), Ella Shohat and Yehuda Shenhav (2006), amongst others, have shown that critical studies of Israel's policies and of Zionism have normally been dismissed as anti-Semitic. Shenhav (2006), for example, in his critical book, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity*, tells the story of how this challenge is not exclusionary of Israeli Jewish academics, mainly those of Arab origins, known as Mizraheem, who wish to contest the status quo of the Ashkinazi's western hegemonic character of Israel. Israeli society, he argues, "had placed a taboo on any discussion of the Mizrahi question as a political issue (as distinct from a folkloristic phenomenon) (2006: 70) and therefore, tried to keep such intra-Jewish ethnicity invisible. Academics who question those taboos are accused of "disseminating hatred" and "rage," creating "antagonism between communities" and are cast as "extremist' and sick" (ibid: 8).

To conclude, I draw on Bourdieu's (2004) advice on conducting research in a politically and socially complex site. As he would suggest, a researcher should be aware of issues of reflexivity, the social world of the researched group, subjectivity, objectivity, methodology and the role of the researcher in society, and the crucial role all these play in the production of knowledge. Therefore, I had to engage in what he calls "critical vigilance" (ibid: 427) where nothing is taken for granted or self-evident and everything is constantly called into question, even if I belong to the larger researched group. For me the two elements of my identity of being a researcher and a Palestinian were not mutually exclusive. My allegiance was to respecting the integrity of the research and to producing an objective, well-researched piece of work, without compromising either the subjective experiences of the residents of Umm al-Fahem, the research credibility, or my subjective interest and passion about the topic. Employing reflexivity throughout the research project and questioning my positionality has been indispensable to converting what Bourdieu (ibid) called "political impulses into scientific endeavours."

### **Breaking boundaries and gaining trust**

Before setting off, I had to think about the best way of getting started, given that I hardly had personal contacts or acquaintances. My family's neighbourhood baker was the only one I knew. All I had in mind was the image of the city being conservative, religious, political and home to some of the most active students at the Hebrew University, where I did my undergraduate studies. My first encounter with Fahmawis was during my studies at the Hebrew University in mid 1990s. They were very politically active, conscious and vocal students. Their impact on Palestinian students' life was greater than their proportionately small numbers, compared to other students

from other localities and certainly those from my village. Ever since, and thanks to them, Umm al-Fahem has been a site which has provoked my interest and curiosity.

Prior to the fieldwork, I had to think about tools which would make me welcomed and trusted, especially so that I could be perceived as different in relation to my appearance and non-conformist life-choices.<sup>104</sup> Being a woman who unlike many of the women in the city, does not wear a *hijab*, studying and living abroad and being married to an English man, wearing big glasses and having what could be perceived as messy curly hair (a type of hair which is not very desirable in a society which tends to prefer it long and straight) and my ethnographer/photographer image: carrying conspicuous research tools: the camera and the A3 drawing book, were all part of what could potentially constitute a barrier between me and the potential interviewees.

The major imaginary, if real barrier, however, was the challenge of gaining the trust of people, where fear of state harassment, as shown in the pictures above (figures 5,6, 7, 8 & 9) is a reality and state security equals control even in the most sacred spheres of life such as the family and breadwinning.<sup>105</sup> In this regard, Umm al-Fahem bears a special consideration for its revolutionary history, the recent persecution of some of its Islamic leaders, and the monstrous image of the city constructed by the Israeli media.

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<sup>104</sup> Being familiar with our society, where marriage is supreme, I knew that interviewees would ask me personal questions, especially about my marital status and why I live abroad. While in the field I was asked by some if I was a girl or a woman? Being a girl, regardless of age, means that a woman is not married. Being a woman, regardless of age again, means she is married.

<sup>105</sup> For further details on state control of the most scared aspects of private life, see introduction chapter.

To break such imaginary barriers, I decided to consciously dress modestly and to accentuate my local accent, using the *chaf* instead of *Kaf*, the *qaf/kaf* instead of the *aal*. In the Palestinian context these letters are symbols of class, urban/rural and regional divide. The *chaf* and *qaf/kaf*, although regional, are associated with the village and working class accent. The *kaf* and *aal*, in contrast, are mostly spoken in established urban centres and villages in the Galilee. In the Wadi Ara region where Umm al-Fahem is, it is mostly the middle-class and university graduates milieu that have adopted the *kaf* to be their accent.<sup>106</sup>

Speaking with the local accent proved to be the right decision. Some of the random people who were either part of the research or got chatted to while walking the streets showed their respect that I was still ‘adhering’ to the local accent. It made them feel I was one of them. “The *chaf* feels more comfortable,” said a young Fahmawi who runs a little shop/food stall, called Guevara Kiosk. Another incident was with a 100-year-old woman, who before 1948 had lived in the city of Haifa. Because I was not wearing a *hijab* she thought I was a city-girl when she first saw me. “I thought you were *madaniyyih* [city girl],” she said. When she heard my *chaf*, acknowledging her misjudgement, she said: “you are indeed a *fallahah* [peasant].” However, immediately after clarifying my urban/rural identity, and despite my modest clothing, she asked why I was not wearing a *hijab*.

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<sup>106</sup> In Iraq, for example, big urban centres such as Baghdad, the *chaf* is the norm and is not a symbol of class-urban and regional divides as in the Palestinian case.

In the Palestinian culture, especially among the older generation, it is almost a tradition that upon meeting a stranger for the first time, they try to establish where s/he comes from, particularly when coming from the same geographical region. In mapping out the social network one belongs to, they first ask about the family name, then more specifically the father's name, other relatives, or neighbours even. Conscious of my neutrality as a researcher, I was reluctant to give details about my family's background. However, in certain situations when meeting some old men who revealed their communist identity and as part of the identification process, it was inevitable that I talked about my brother, who was a communist and had lots of comrades in the city. He was also the physics teacher in the city's high school until 1989. Those emotionally touching moments left us in tears because of my brother's sudden death in 2004. Such a connection did contribute to a greater trust and made me feel welcomed.

To conclude, not only did the imaginary boundaries break down as soon as I started the research, in certain situations, especially after spending intensive periods of time in the city, they provoked interest in what I was doing in the city. At times, boundaries needed to be created, especially when interviewees wanted to share their personal domestic stories. I had to show sympathy but remind them why I was there. On the whole, the city, the people, the interviewees, regardless of their political affiliations and regardless of age and gender all felt welcoming and collaborative. Their reactions showed the agency of my gender and education, which for them represented a sense of pride that Palestinian women have ambitions, are educated and independent.

My interviewees made themselves available and were flexible with time, generously spending hours giving me formal and informal talks about the city, its history, politics, art and its pressing issues. They opened their houses and private archives and provided a reference point and were a source of information, whenever needed. In some cases, we strolled through the streets together and they even drove me around with their cars and sometimes gave me a lift home.<sup>107</sup> I felt privileged and honoured to have chosen their city and to have come to know them and learn about their history. They were keen, proud and appreciative to tell the story of their city and to have their voices heard.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter started by sharing a vignette from my first few moments in the field that illustrated how the unplanned usage of the camera as an entry point into securing access to field interviewees proved successful. It showed how within less than 10 minutes of my stay in Umm al-Fahem, the question of accessing random residents was resolved thanks to the camera creating the moment of brief encounter. This moment proved crucial, as before embarking on fieldwork the research had identified

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<sup>107</sup> Hospitality towards non-Fahmawis, regardless of their ethnic or religious origins and as long as they are not racist or have the intention to inflict violence on the city, is a characteristic that Fahmawis feel proud of. It was a recurrent theme in many interviews, where people talked enthusiastically about it. For them, retaining such an image is very important, especially when discussing racist attacks on the city. Only racists are not welcomed in the city. Hashim Mahameed, mayor of the city in the 1980s and a member of Knesset until the mid 1990s, wrote in an article to *Yediot Ahronot* on 22 Nov 2007 “it is ludicrous that some [Jewish] institutions and firms refrain from offering their services in the city without armed security escort, creating by this a frightening impression that the city is under occupation. This is in contrast to the well-known fact that Umm-el-Fahem is a city which welcomes its visitors with respect, regardless of their origins. Our guests encounter a population which does not know how to hate, but does know how to defend itself against hatred and racism” (Mahameed, H. (2007) ‘Makes One Think of a Village: Neglected by the State’, *Yediot Ahronot*, 22 November 2007, p. 9) [Hebrew].



that interviewing random residents of the city was indispensable to addressing the research questions and, thereafter, the production of the substantive part of the research.

The chapter then moved on to discuss how the project's questions and methodology had developed organically according to material that emerged from the initial ethnographic experience in the city. It described the different stages of research, the additional methods that needed to be adopted and the rationale behind using them in the process of what the chapter referred to as deconstructing for constructing. Trying to form an understanding of the Palestinian city in Israel, its materiality, the semiotics of its public space and its socio-spatiality, the way it was perceived by its residents, and the social and political actors involved in its production and (un)making was what guides this process.

Moreover, the chapter discussed how, as well as investigating residents' subjective accounts and experiences of their city and the historical and structural forces that shape and produce the Palestinian city, allowing room for my own inquiring gaze while in the field was no less important in the deconstructing for constructing process. Embedding myself in the city, strolling its streets, taking photographs of its built-environment and grasping its materiality and semiotics were all part of the process.

Being open, flexible, and attentive to unexpected material all through the ethnographic experience was my strategy, despite its subsequent methodological, thematic, and theoretical challenges and anxieties. The chapter described how I felt I was being distracted by some of the unexpected material that emerged. This was particularly in relation to the socio-political history of the city and the 1989 shift in its

political map. Allowing time for reflection, careful data analysis and thought-provoking conversations with my supervisor helped me realise that what initially seemed distracting and off the subject was in fact related, if not foundational to my research. The chapter described how before long, and without having any previous plans, I found myself engaged in an organic process of theorisation and conceptualisation of the Palestinian city in Israel.

The chapter then discussed how conducting research in a highly politicised context required a special attention to methodological, positional and contextual challenges. At the heart of these challenges, that are also interconnected, stood the question of how to produce objective knowledge in a context of qualitative urban ethnography, in a politicised context, and without compromising field interviewees' accounts of their experiences of their city. The use of additional methods proved indispensable in this case. Archival research of newspaper and magazine articles, official state statistics, official statements by voices from within the establishment quoted by nationally recognised newspapers, official master plans, as well as taking photographs of the city's built-environment were all mobilised to help cross-check events narrated by interviews and to provide external objective evidence of their arguments and accounts.

The chapter ended with a description of the strategy I chose in gaining the trust of my field interviewees. Trust forms an important aspect, if not the base, of ethnographic work, especially when conducted in politicised contexts. Paying attention to sartorial modesty, ensuring modesty and clarity of speech, speaking with the local accent, as well as radiating confidence and professionalism all paid off in gaining trust and breaking boundaries.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The city and the public space**

Neither cities nor places in them are unordered, unplanned; the question is only whose order, whose planning, for what purpose.

(Marcus 1995: 244, quoted in Yacobi 2009:5)

This short chapter lays down one of the thesis' main theoretical foundations, that is the question of the city, urbanity and material public space. Its overall objective is to anchor the Palestinian city in the wider context of what makes a city and to address meta-questions of why the city and why public space. In a crude rudimentary fashion, the chapter introduces the three different concepts and their indispensable role in enhancing citizenship, politics and public life, as well as in providing space for culture and personal freedoms to flourish and be materialised. It discusses their potentialities and challenges and puts forward the argument that both cities and public spaces are produced and constructed and therefore reflect, embody, and reproduce social, economic and political relations.

The city and public space as exclusionary-exclusive sites are discussed. Although the chapter traces this feature back to the ancient Greek *polis* and *agora*, it is modern times that occupy the bulk of this argument as discussed in the subchapter of ageographical cities. It illuminates the argument by drawing on the growing body of literature concerned with the changing meaning of cities and the increasing erosion of public space under neoliberalism. Elaborating on Mike Davis' (1992) account of the transformation of Los Angeles into an urban desert, the subchapter seeks to show how

the exclusion of the undesirable classed and racialised urban poor is performed in and through space.

Moving to describe de-urbanisation of black South Africans under apartheid, the chapter illustrates how from the colonial state perspective crowd control stands at the core of the urban question. The chapter then concludes that regardless of the state's character and nature, whether it is capitalist, post-industrialist, or colonialist, urban space, public space and the undesirables are perceived as a threat that needs to be fragmented and controlled.

As far as literature is concerned the chapter draws on literature from urban, sociological and (post)colonial disciplines. It features mostly works by Hannah Arendt, Henri Lefebvre, Louis Wirth, Georg Simmel, Richard Sennett, Mike Davis, Robert Caro, Marshall Berman, Paul Gilroy, Don Mitchell, Mitchell Duneier, David Harvey, Mahmood Mamdani, Paul Rabinow and Frantz Fanon.

### **Cities: citizenship, politics and urbanity**

“Cities are civilisation” (LeGates and Stout 1996:15). They are the “incubators and sustainers of advanced culture” (ibid). In ancient Greece, for example, it was within the vibrant urban life of the city, the *polis*, that writing, theatre, culture, art, mathematics and politics flourished, and where the concepts of urban citizenship and self-government emerged. Politics and cities were inextricably linked. The *polis* was the context within which citizens could be public and political, learn the art of speech and negotiation and where matters were decided through such avenues, rather than force. As Arendt (1998[1958]: 26) notes: “[t]o be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and

violence.” Persuasion was designated to the *polis* while force belonged to the private sphere, the home and family “where the household head ruled with uncontested, despotic powers” (1998: 27).

“[T]he *polis* was for the Greeks, as the *res publica* was for the Romans, first of all their guarantee against the futility of individual life” (ibid: 56).<sup>108</sup> Therefore, it was in the *polis* that political organisation, which is inherently public, could be realised. “According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to the natural association whose center is the home (*oikia*) and the family” (ibid 24). For Aristotle, the *polis* had a distinct political way of life “in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other.” The non-citizens; slaves and barbarians who lived outside of the *polis* were *aneu logou*, that is deprived of the way of life that facilitated speech (ibid 27).

So what is a city? And what makes it into a unique space? The answer to such somewhat generic question has an interdisciplinary dimension and could be examined from many different angles and at two different levels. The two levels are the macro, which is structural, and the micro, that is urbanity, the way of living and city dwellers’ agency. The macro could encompass the political character of the state in which the city resides, its history, structure, demographics, ethnic and cultural composition, power relations, ecology, geo-politics, built environment, function,

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<sup>108</sup> For Sennett (2002: 3-4) *res publica* “stands in general for those bonds of association and mutual commitment which exist between people who are not joined together by ties of family or intimate association; it is the bond of a crowd, of a “people,” of a polity, rather than the bonds of family or friends.”

architecture, art, semiotics, religion, politics, socio-economic developments and urban policies.

While recognising that cities and their trajectories do not subscribe to the category of sameness, but are rather influenced by macro structural processes and characteristics internal to their societies as well as external social and political formations, such as war and colonialism, there is however a rudimentary sociological definition which could have claims to universality. Louis Wirth (1938: 8), for example, refers to the city as a social entity and defines it as “a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.”<sup>109</sup> For Lewis Mumford “it is art, culture and political purpose, not numbers, that define a city” (quoted in LeGates and Stout 1996: 32). Richard Sennett (2002: 264) defines it as “that human settlement in which strangers are most likely to meet.” It is “an instrument of impersonal life, the mold in which diversity and complexity of persons, interests, and tastes become available as social experience” (ibid: 339).

The city is also an important context for the development of social movements (Tonkiss 2005: 65) and is central to the operations of power. Some urbanists such as Goonewardena and Kipfer (2007: 25) and Wirth (1938: 5) attribute its dominance and importance to its ability to centralise military, political and economic activities, as well as being the hub for administrative facilities, commercial, financial, transportation, communication, recreational, higher education, religious and welfare

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<sup>109</sup> When discussing urbanism, Wirth (1938:4) recognises that numbers and size of the city could not be the sole criterion of urbanity.

institution and infrastructure. Others, however, focus on the distinct way of life in the city that is urbanism and how that shapes social orders.

In his book *Writing on the City* (1996), Henri Lefebvre argues that urban life is an indicator and a gauge against which the development of society is measured. For him, its development “can only be conceived...by the realisation of urban society” (1996: 176). To exclude the urban from groups, classes and individuals is to deprive them from civilisation, if not from society itself (ibid: 195). The urban in this context means the place of encounter, assemblage, heterogeneity and priority to use value, of which the cafe, the commercial centre, the street and cultural amenities constitute a few examples (ibid: 80). It is within this understanding of the urban that he coined “the right to the city,” a right which became celebrated and advocated by geographers and urbanists such as David Harvey (2008, 2012) and Don Mitchell (2003).

For Lefebvre, the right to the city is not “a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities.” It is rather the right “...to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places” (ibid: 158, 179). The right to the city is that of “gathering together instead of a fragmentation” (ibid: 195). It is a right that should be enshrined as a human right: “the freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights” (Harvey 2008: 23).

Another feature of the city which sociology is concerned with is the nature of human relations. Sociologists agree that in the city, these relations are not of primary connections. They are rather impersonal and secondary. The city breaks up traditional organised units resting on kinship. Social bonds in this context, as Durkheim would

note, are forged through commonalities of belief, custom, rituals, routines, etc. As well as existing or potential opportunities for meeting, conversing and organising with others with whom one shares commonalities and interests, whether political, ideological or cultural, cities are also places of anonymity. In the city, Wirth (1938), who draws on Max Weber and Georg Simmel, argues that while the physical and face-to-face contact might be close, the social contact, however, is distant. One could enjoy a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls and expectations of intimate groups (ibid), the tyrannies of intimacy, as Sennett (2002) calls it.

Simmel (1903) in the *Metropolis and Mental Life* describes life in the city as being characterised by intensive sensory stimuli that involve sight, smell and sound. The country in contrast has a much slower rhythm of life and sensory imagery. City dwellers also have to be more rational and calculated in the way they conduct their life and are generally more attuned to time. The hectic rhythms of the city and the constant bombardment of such stimuli encourage a type of behaviour which he calls the blasé, that is the incapacity to react to new sensations and the ability to emotionally disengage from the happenings around, especially when those are emotionally distant and do not involve intimate relationships.

Such conditions make the city a space where individual freedoms, liberties and desires have the potential to be fulfilled, where otherness and difference reside and where a cosmopolitan culture and creativity have the potential to emerge and flourish. It is in this context that one can understand why Marx and Engels (1848) in the *Communist Manifesto* deplored the idiocy of the countryside. Not because people are stupid but because of the nature of the closed, insular community which creates



homogenous groups, and the conformity and control that limit creativity and bring to scrutiny the actions of those who seek to break out of it. As the medieval saying goes “[c]ity air makes people free,” (Sorkin 1992: xv).

### **Material public space**

Cities, however, are not abstract spaces. Rather, they are material and it is in public space that public life and activities, whether cultural, social, economic or political, are performed. Material public space is a prerequisite for public life. As Arendt (1998: 194-195) put it: “[b]efore men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place...” In ancient Greece, this definite space was the *agora*, that is the public space of the *polis* where public life was materialised. The *agora* functioned as “the place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted...it was also the marketplace, a place of the pleasurable jostling, where citizens’ bodies, words, actions, and produce were literally on mutual display, and where judgments, decisions, and bargains were made” (Mitchell 1995: 116).

The *agora* was the place where “the citizen could realise his spiritual, moral and intellectual capacities” (Kitto 1996: 31). It was also the space of appearance and visibility, a component which for Arendt is indispensable to being: “the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things make their appearance explicitly...To men the reality of the world

is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all; ‘for what appears to all, this we call Being’ (Arendt: 198-99).<sup>110</sup>

Public space that is material, unmediated, and free of exclusive access rights is indicative of the democratic nature of society and is an indispensable component of it. It is in and through public space that democratic rights, and the struggle to achieve such rights, are exercised and where alternative movements have the potential to arise and contest issues of citizenship and democracy. As Mitchell (1995:123) observes, social movements must and do occupy material public space in the city: “these movements are premised on the notion that democratic (and certainly revolutionary) politics are impossible without the simultaneous creation and control of material space.”

Visibility, which is by definition a vocal demand and a statement of public recognition and legitimacy, is one of the most important features of democratic public space. The “...public space is a place within which political movements can stake out the territory that allows them to be *seen* (and heard)” (Mitchell 2003: 129 [original emphasis and brackets]). However, to be seen and heard extends beyond political movements. The vulnerable sections of society, those on the margins of society or those who are not located within its hetero-normative order, as well as demanding their socio-economic rights be recognised, demand to be seen and heard. The sexual citizenship and gay rights struggle is partly, but importantly, a struggle for visibility and to gain legitimacy in public space.

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<sup>110</sup> Quoting Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Mitchell (1995), while acknowledging the important role electronic space could play in political movements and revolutions, argues that no revolution has been conducted in such spaces. For him revolutions involve taking to the streets and occupying public space. “Political movements must create the space in which they can be represented” (ibid: 124). His argument is squarely relevant to contemporary discussions around the 2011 Egyptian revolution in particular and other public protests, whether in the streets of London in the summer of 2011, or those of Bahrain, Yemen, the Occupy movement of Wall Street New York, St Paul’s London, Spain and others.

Many analysts, hyped about facebook and social media networks, hailed them as the catalyst behind the Egyptian revolution. Without getting into details about the material conditions and the tyrannical, oppressive and repressive regime, the extremes of poverty and wealth and deepened socio-economic polarisation under which many Egyptians live and which they sought to radically change, it was Tahrir Square, the persistent presence of Egyptians in their millions and the battles around its open streets that made Egyptians visible. Tahrir Square, referred to as the beating heart of the revolution (Grondahl and Mohyeldin 2011), became iconic of the Egyptian uprising. Its symbolism became an inspiration to the many demonstrations and peoples’ assemblies that swept across the globe in 2011 (see figure 10 below). The materiality of public space, as Gilroy (2010: 22) would argue, in a different context nonetheless, synchronises collective experiences of oppression, creating therefore the potential for public protest or “acting in concert” as he calls it.



Figure 10: Tahrir Square street sign, London Stock Exchange Occupation in St Paul's (LSX) 21 October 2011

Cities and their public spaces do not exist in a vacuum, neither are they static. Lefebvre asks the questions “Who produces?”, ‘What?’, ‘How?’, ‘Why and for whom?’ (1991: 69). He argues that not only is space constructed and produced, it also embodies social and political relations and reproduces them. Space also works as a tool for the analysis of society (ibid: 26-27). Literature on cities, from Engels’ (1984 [1844]) writings on *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, particularly his essay ‘The Great Town,’ in which he reveals how class apartheid is demonstrated in the built-environment of Manchester, to the ghettoisation of Los Angeles (Davis 1992 [1990]), the Haussmannisation of Paris in the nineteenth century (Harvey 2005, Sennett 2002), the active privatisation of human life (Sennett 2002) to writings on the deliberate fragmentation of black communities in apartheid South Africa through policies of ethnic homelands and influx control (Dawson 2005: 134), are all but a few examples of how political, economic, social and class realities, as well as power relations are manifested and performed in the built-environment.

Foucault (1998: 237), characterising the present epoch as being primarily “the epoch of space,” suggests that the organisation of space is a form of exercising power and control over those who occupy the space. To prove his argument, he took the example of the panopticon, a model first introduced by Jeremy Bentham, as an institution in which the use of coercion and commands to control a population was replaced by the partition of space, the isolation of individuals, and their systematic yet unseen surveillance, where they can be seen but not see.

Cities and public spaces, however, as well as being spaces of heterogeneity and otherness, spaces of potentialities, culture and politics, liberties and desires, activities and organisation, productivity and employment, pleasure and creativity, are also

places of fear, oppression, repression, exclusion and power relations. Even the highly celebrated and romanticised *agora* of ancient Greece was a site of exclusive and exclusionary properties. Although it provided a meeting point where strangers and people from all walks of life could physically share the same public space and where politics, commerce and spectacle were juxtaposed (Mitchell 1995), enjoyment of public life and citizenship rights in the *polis* were restricted to a narrow and privileged social class, known as the free citizens. Women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from enjoying such rights (Arendt 1998; Low and Smith 2006; Mitchell 1995, 2003). Citizenship rights were awarded to a carefully selected homogenous social class of “those with power, standing, and respectability” (Mitchell 1995: 116).<sup>111</sup> To conclude, both cities and public spaces are contested spaces “within which dominant power holders try to stipulate ‘normative ecologies’ of who ‘belongs’ (and who does not) where and when within the urban fabric” (Norris and Armstrong 1999, quoted in Graham and Marvin 2001: 232).

### **Ageographical cities: neoliberalism, segregation, control and the changing meaning of the city and its public space**

In modern times, particularly those under the dictates of a neoliberal social order, commodity fetishism, privatisation, and the rise of the private home and property and its protection to an unprecedented sanctuary value, urbanists and sociologists alike are increasingly concerned and occupied with the meaning of the city and its public space. There exists a growing body of literature (Berman 1983; Davis 1992 ; Duneier

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<sup>111</sup> These exclusionary features aside, the *agora* provides a prototype of what a public space and participatory citizenship should and could look like.



2001; Harvey 2012; Graham and Marvin 2001; Lefebvre 1991; Low and Smith 2005; Mitchell 1995, 2003; Sennett 2002; Sorkin 1992)<sup>112</sup> that is concerned with the progressive erosion of public space, its appropriation by corporate and real-estate developers and the radical transformation of its meaning and function, its subjection to increased surveillance, securitisation and control, the homogenisation of urban design and those who have access rights to public space, the transformation of urbanity, the attack on democratic rights, the suburbanisation of cities and their radical transformation into what Sorkin (1992: xi) calls the ageographical cities. Such phenomena are mostly experienced in advanced capitalist and post-industrial cities, especially those in the United States of America.

The clampdown on public space on the one hand, and the promotion of pseudo public space, on the other, assume an accelerated rate under the political climate of neoliberalism, which encourages, legitimises and allows such changes and attacks to happen. This pseudo public space is geared towards consumption and what Gilroy (2010) would call consumerist citizenship. Leisure and recreational space ruled by classed-access and racialised regulations, where only those who can afford to pay can enjoy it, stands at the heart of it. This process intensified in the name of public safety and national security (Low and Smith 2005:1) since the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.

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<sup>112</sup> This by no means serves as an exhaustive list of authors concerned with the urban question and public space.

At the heart of such clampdown and transformations is the isolation and exclusion of the undesirables or what Davis (1992) calls the urban pariah; the poor Latino families and immigrants, young black men, the homeless, from public space and public sight. The ultimate objection is the maximisation of control, whether through surveillance or reducing social interactions to a minimum, all in the defence of the corporate edifices and the middle and upper-class life style of exuberant consumption (Davis 1992; Sorkin 1992; Mitchell 1995).

Mike Davis (1992) in his book *City of Quartz* on Los Angeles' (LA's) urban desert, tells the story of a city as one of commodification, privatisation, militarisation, securitisation, corporatisation, ghettoisation, urban segregation, racialisation, South-Africanisation of spatial relations, and social and class polarisation that resulted in the radical transformation of the city's urban and public space on one hand, and the exclusion, demonisation and criminalisation of the undesirable and impoverished sections of society on the other. The constellation of private capital, greedy real-estate developers and LA Police Department (LAPD) converge in their interest to appropriate and control public space by waging a class and race war on the urban pariah.<sup>113</sup>

The battleground for this war is in and through architecture and urban design. LAPD, for example, sits on the design board of at least one major Downtown redevelopment

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<sup>113</sup> The real-estate developers not only transform the socio-spatiality of the city ruthlessly, displacing and further attacking the poor but are willing to uproot and clean whatever comes on their way which could obstruct their developments. Nature is no exception to their brutality. When necessary it is also razed to the ground: "the region's major natural wonder, a Joshua tree forest containing individual specimens often thirty feet high and older than the Domesday Book, is being bulldozed into oblivion" (Davis 1992:4).



project. The city in its repressive class war even invokes cold war idioms by promoting the “containment’ of the homeless,” with public toilets being “the real Eastern Front of the Downtown war on the poor” (1992: 232-233). In Skid Row, the Community Redevelopment Agency, following the advice of the LAPD, bulldozed the remaining public toilets, justifying its actions through the “quasi-public restrooms,’ – meaning toilets in restaurants, art galleries and office buildings - which can be made available to tourists and office workers while being denied to vagrants and other unsuitables” (ibid: 234). As a result of such deliberate policies, LA has fewer available public toilets than any major North American city (ibid: 233). As evinced in Duneier’s (2001) photo-ethnographic book *Sidewalk*, ‘taking a piss’ with dignity, which is one of the most fundamental things in life, becomes difficult if not impossible for a homeless in the streets of New York’s affluent neighbourhoods.

The crusade to secure the city is the *de facto* destruction of accessible public space (Davis 1992: 226). It turns public facilities and spaces as “unliveable’ as possible for the homeless and the poor” (ibid: 232). The proliferation of pseudo-public spaces, where public activity is mostly anti-pedestrian and internalised, and is subject to surveillance and under the panopticon gaze, seen but not seen, is taking over. Such spaces are the norm and they share the common interest of driving the undesirable away. “[T]he sumptuary malls, office centers, culture acropolises, and so on - are full of invisible signs warning off the underclass ‘Other’”(ibid: 226). Their unwritten access regulations, which set behavioural rules of what is accepted and what is not (Mitchell 1995), extend to include streets, public parks, even public benches. The once vibrant pedestrian streets are turned into “traffic sewers” and public parks are transformed into “temporary receptacles for the homeless and wretched” (Davis 1992:

226). The class and race war is also manifested in increasingly dwindling public amenities, closure of playgrounds and libraries, derelict parks, segregated beaches and criminalisation of youth whose ordinary congregations are banned.

The affluent and luxurious side of LA, however, represents a diametrically opposed reality, where segregation and privatisation are the desirable and sought-after commodities. They represent the epitome of urban enclavisation. The contrast between the two invokes South Africanisation of spatial relations where urban space is increasingly taking on the Manichaeism of a racial colonial and apartheid order. The obsession with security is rampant in those luxurious gated communities which are becoming fortress cities with encompassing visible and invisible walls, restricted entry points with guard posts, and “passport control’ on outsiders” (ibid: 244-46). They have their own private armed security guards and private residential parks. Security, however, is less about personal safety than insulation, whether in residential, work and travel environments. It is “a prestige symbol,” “a positional good defined by income access to private ‘protective services’ and membership in some hardened residential enclave or restricted suburb” (ibid: 224). It is in fact another commodity to consume that is in high demand and which yields a lucrative industry.

Davis concludes that the aims behind the manipulation of architecture converge with police interest around the problem of crowd control (ibid: 257). Not only does architecture serve the function of keeping the crowd under control but also homogenises it by filtering out the undesirables. LA’s “contemporary Downtown ‘renaissance’ is designed to make” the once heterogeneous space of “mixed crowds of Anglo Black and Latino pedestrians of different ages and classes” virtually impossible

(ibid: 231). LA “once-upon-a-time a demi-paradise of free beaches, luxurious parks, and ‘cruising strips’, genuinely democratic space is all but extinct” (ibid: 227).

In a similar vein, Mitchell (1995), who asks whether public space has come to an end, concludes that the struggle over public space is a struggle over opposing ideologies, conflicting desires, needs and visions for public space and the different ways members of society conceptualise its meaning. Those in power speak the language of order and those in the margins speak the language of rights and democratic rights. For activists who defend the rights to unregulated accessible public spaces as in the case of People’s Park in Berkeley, the park “was a place where the rights of citizenship could be expanded to the most disenfranchised segment of contemporary American democracy: the homeless. People’s Park provided the space for representing the legitimacy of homeless people within ‘the public’” (Mitchell 1995: 117). Hence, restricting the homeless access to public space is to deny them social legitimacy.

Spatial segregation along racial and/or class lines and the manipulation of architecture and urban design is not a new phenomenon. Haussmann’s urban restructuring of Paris was, among other things, geared to achieve such an effect. Marshall Berman (1983) in his book *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, and Robert Caro’s (1974) *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, analyse the classed and racialised character of the destruction of the Bronx in New York for building the Cross Bronx Expressway by the architect Robert Moses (who is known as the Haussmann of New York), and its impact on the urban experience. The radical transformation of the environment prioritised the commodity fetish of the automobile, speed and consumerism and the interests of the rich. It was often at the expense of the poor, the non-whites, and the working class who witnessed the destruction of their traditional

neighbourhoods, the corner shops and streets and their evictions in tens of thousands. Moses who destroyed those communities “built parks and playgrounds with a lavish hand, but they were parks and playgrounds for the rich and comfortable. Recreational facilities for the poor he doled out like a miser” (Caro 1974: 20). When he built houses and flats for the poor these were not only bleak and cheap, but also in locations that contributed to their further racial and class ghettoisation (ibid).

### **The colonial city: different contexts similar currency**

The urban question, the militarisation of public space and systems of racialised spatial exclusion and control justified by demonising the other, assume a more profound, conspicuous, Manichaeic and repressive tone in colonial contexts. In advanced capitalist cities, the undesirable others are the poor, the working class and the underclass who are also racialised. In a colonial context the other is the colonised. Despite the difference in their circumstances, the undesirables in both contexts are subject to a similar currency of racialised socio-spatial polarisation and deliberate fragmentation that is aimed at keeping the threat they are thought to pose at bay.

Whether it is advanced capitalism, colonialism or postcolonialism, these systems conceive of urban space, public space, and the undesirables as a threat that needs to be fragmented and controlled. In a colonial context, however, spatial segregation is enforced by the power of the gun and law made to fit the ruling class. Those who do not conform are faced with criminalisation and punishment. Mahmood Mamdani’s (1996) book *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, which revolves around the fundamental question of how to ensure the rule of a colonial minority over a majority native population, shows that managing the

urban question in Apartheid South Africa was key to keeping black Africans under control. Influx control and pass laws, introduced before but consolidated under Apartheid, were rigidly enforced against black Africans' movement when present in white areas. They were instrumental in maintaining the Apartheid regime.

Mamdani (1996) notes that already before Apartheid was formally institutionalised, the colonial government, which had pursued territorial segregation, recognised the threat of black South Africans urbanisation. Their urbanisation threatened to break away from the traditional customary system through which the colonial government ensured the natives subordination. Urbanisation embodied the threat of their detribalisation, which meant a destabilisation of the colonial government. "So long as the native family home is not with the white man but in his own area, so long the native organization will not be materially affected"(1996: 6), urbanisation, in Smuts words, was under control.

It is only when segregation breaks down, when the whole family migrates from the tribal home and out of the tribal jurisdiction to the white man's farm or the white man's town, that the tribal bond is snapped, and the traditional system falls in decay. And it is this migration of the native family, of the females and children, to the farms and the towns which should be prevented.

(quoted ibid)

The rapid structural changes in the economy, its industrialisation and the demand for cheap labour, resulted in the inevitable urbanisation of black South Africans. This, however, posed a challenge to the colonial government that was faced with the labour question on one hand, and the native or the demographic, on the other. The presence of large numbers of black people in white cities, whose objective conditions were of exploitation and deprivation at the hands of the ruling white minority that enjoyed the

privileges of their work, was a recipe for potential violence, and a threat to the regime's status quo.

Apartheid, Mamdani (1996: 27) argues, was the answer for mitigating such a tension. Apartheid, for him, was a form of rule over the native, which "like the indirect rule colonial state - fractured the ranks of the ruled along a double divide: ethnic on the one hand, rural-urban on the other." It was "the result of a reform in the mode of rule which attempted to contain a growing urban-based revolt, first by repackaging the native population under the immediate constellation of autonomous Native Authorities so as to fragment it, and then by policing its movement between country and town so as to freeze the division between the two" (ibid: 31).

Therefore, the fragmentation of communities along ethnic and racial lines and the control over black South Africans' spatialisation and their movement were a necessary control mechanism. When in urban places, they were temporary residents restricted to their migrant status. They were migrant workers. Key to controlling them was to spatially confine them and cut them off from the surrounding townships on one hand, and employing indirect rule, on the other. The control over them was also gendered. When in the single sex hostels, black rural migrants were subject to the control of their respective Native Authorities, where they had their families. "Every effort was made to turn urban hostels in which migrants lived into enclaves shut off socially and physically from surrounding townships, just as an effort was made to subordinate migrants inside hostels to a regime of indirect rule" (ibid: 220).

To be in the city, the indigenous black population had to be legally entitled to be there. Only employed workers could be in the city and those were subject to a regime

of restrictions and pass laws. Those who were caught in the city “for staying longer than seventy-two hours without the requisite permission or for failing to produce their passbooks on demand” were criminalised and sent to prison. An estimated seventeen and a half million black migrants were prosecuted under the pass laws between 1916 and 1981 (ibid: 228). In addition, black South Africans were subject to what Mamdani (ibid: 29) called the artificial de-urbanisation and brutal forced removals of their growing urban population. However, such attempts by the Apartheid regime had failed to weaken the strength of urban-based black South Africans. “One testimony to the strength of the black civil society was the urban uprising that built wave upon wave following Soweto 1976 and that was at the basis the shift in the paradigm of resistance from armed to popular struggle” (ibid: 29).

In North Africa, French colonial urbanism employed unequal urban policies. One reinforced tradition and another endorsed modernity. Culture was invoked to justify such racialised policies. For the colonial officers, Europeans and Muslims had different cultural practices. They claimed that modernising the *medina* - the traditional town where Moroccans lived - by introducing wide streets and modern architecture of water and sewer, would ruin its charm (Rabinow 1989: 301). For Huber Lyautey, head of the protectorate of Morocco, however important the aesthetic of urban design was, “appearance was functionally equivalent to being,” it was social hierarchy that was central to his rule over the colonised (ibid: 284, 282). His strategy “emphasized the necessity of reorganizing power relations among social groups” which was to be achieved through urban planning (ibid: 288). The dual city, building modern French cities adjacent to Morocco's older picturesque *madinas*, was the form that this hierarchy took (ibid: 286). The duality guaranteed that the two cities were

close yet separate. The overarching objective behind it, apart from its touristic and therefore economic value, was political (Rabinow 1989; Wright 1997).

Duality was used as a control mechanism that aimed to prevent resistance to colonial authority. The colonial officials “hoped to preserve an established sense of hierarchy and propriety, buttressing it with what they perceived to be traditional rituals, spatial patterns, and architectural ornament, believing that this would reinforce their own super-imposed order” (Wright 1997: 323). Lyautey and his head of urbanism, Henri Prost, designed policies which were conducive to their colonial needs. Policies which “could effectively quell the possibility of social unrest and encourage economic development” (ibid: 326) and meet military ends (Rabinow 1989: 298). Policies that would guarantee surveillance and domination. Janet Abu-Lughud (1980) characterised such spatial policies as a theatre of urban Apartheid.

Frantz Fanon (1969 [1961]), in *The Wretched of the Earth*, provides a graphic representation of the spatial Manichaeic and dual order of colonialism: the European settler city and the native town divided by frontiers of military presence in the shape of barracks and police stations. The Manichaeic order, which is built on, reinforced and maintained by the power of the gun, is inescapably visible in space.

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments...the existence of native quarters and European quarters...schools for natives and schools for Europeans...The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-between...This world cut in two is inhabited by two different species...When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. Fanon (1969:29-31)



Such diametrically opposed duality is irreconcilable and is reciprocally exclusive. “The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one of superfluous” (ibid: 30). Fanon carries on to describe the binaries and polarities of the colonial city not only as manifested in function but also as embedded in its socio-economic, spatiality, architecture and hygiene. It is the contrast between being made to look modern on one side, and deliberate negligence on the other.

The settler’s town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler’s feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you’re never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler’s town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty arabs.

(Ibid: 30)

## Conclusion

By introducing the concepts of the city and the material public space, their potentialities, challenges, and the anxieties they create for the state if not controlled, the chapter laid down one aspect of the thesis' theoretical foundation. The chapter started by tracing the two concepts back to ancient Greece. It introduced the *polis* and the *agora* as the centrepiece of public life and how they played an indispensable role in enhancing citizenship, and in allowing culture and politics to come into shape. The *polis* and the *agora* however were also exclusionary-exclusive types of sites. Although they were meeting points for people from all walks of life, exercising citizenship and public life was exclusive to a very privileged section of society, called the free citizens. Women and slaves, for example, were excluded from enjoying public life, or taking an active role in shaping politics and citizenship.

The chapter then moved to introducing the city as a site of potentialities and personal freedoms. It discussed how the city as a site of urbanity, heterogeneous mingling and impersonal relationships allows personal liberties to be exercised and social control to be less visible. Therefore, creativity and freedom of association with one's like-minded individuals and groups are more likely to be materialised.

Moreover, the chapter discussed how neither cities nor public spaces exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are constructed and produced. They embody and reproduce social, economic and political relations and therefore could be used as a tool for analysing society. Far from being perfect and ideal, cities are also sites of oppression, repression, exclusion and control. This is particularly true for modern times, which are characterised by vicious unprecedented neoliberalism, commodity fetish and

corporatisation. It is against this context that the chapter moved to discuss the changing meaning of cities and the increasing erosion of public space, especially but not solely, in post-industrial capitalist states.

Turning cities and public spaces into homogenised, corporatised exclusionary-exclusive sites is the trend that is in the ascendant. With examples from LA as described by Mike Davis (1992), the chapter illustrated how architectural design is employed as a technology to exclude the undesirables, who are often classed and racialised. The aim of this process is to keep public space exclusive to those who can pay and those who can conform to the consumerist, leisure-led public life. In this context, surveillance and crowd control become indispensable to defending consumerist citizenship, to promoting the corporatised pseudo public spaces and the increasing ghettoised segregated cities.

The chapter finally discussed how the exclusionary-exclusive properties of a city and public space assume similar functions, though sometimes more accentuated under colonial conditions. The undesirables, whether under capitalist/post-industrial regimes or colonial control, are subject to a similar currency of racialised socio-spatial polarisation and deliberate fragmentation that is aimed at keeping the threat they are thought to pose at bay. Regardless of the state's character and nature, urban space, public space and the undesirables are perceived as a threat that needs to be fragmented and controlled. To illustrate the argument, the chapter drew on the black South-Africans under apartheid, as discussed by Mamdani, and Fanon's *Wretched of the earth*.

While the subject of the colonial state and its relationship to the city, citizenship and public space was touched on throughout this chapter, the next chapter will discuss in more detail, the structural and macro historical forces that shape the making of the Palestinian city. It discusses the thesis' second theoretical foundation, that it is Israel's colonial *nomos*, which impinges on and shapes both the very essence of the Palestinian city and citizenship, and their (un)making.

## Chapter 4

### Israel's colonial *nomos*: Manichaeism in the making

Our story is political. Politics permeate every aspect of our lives: the social, the economic, the financial ... Our conflict is with Zionism. Everything is a derivative of it ... What defines our existence is the conflict ... everything revolves around it, including the question of the city and urbanism.

Adil, Umm al-Fahem, 12 July 2009

On 17 September 2014, Israel's Supreme Court dismissed a petition filed by Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow, et al, against the "Admission Committees Law." The law, enacted in March 2011, allows about 434 Jewish community settlements in the Naqab and the Galilee to operate a screening mechanism against applicants for housing on the grounds of "social suitability" and "social and cultural fabric" that each settlement sets for itself.<sup>114</sup> In other words, the law legalises and entrenches racial and class segregation of those perceived as undesirables in about 43 per cent of all towns in the country.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Settlement in this context is not used in reference to the illegal settlements (colonies- Hitanhliyyot in Hebrew) of 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territories. In Hebrew a community settlement, or a community locality is called *Yishuv Kihilati*.

<sup>115</sup> For more information see Adalah (2014) *Israeli Supreme Court upholds "Admissions Committees Law" that allows Israeli Jewish communities to exclude Palestinian Arab citizens*. 17 September 2014. Available at:

[http://adalah.org/eng/Articles/2327/%5C%22http://adalah.org/Public/files/Hebrew/Legal\\_Advocacy/Decisions/%5C%22http://www.adalah.org/eng/?mod=articles&ID=1086%22](http://adalah.org/eng/Articles/2327/%5C%22http://adalah.org/Public/files/Hebrew/Legal_Advocacy/Decisions/%5C%22http://www.adalah.org/eng/?mod=articles&ID=1086%22) . See also:

Zarchin, T. and Khoury, J. (2012) 'Israeli AG Defends Controversial Law on Admissions Panels', *Haaretz* 26 January 2012 [Online].

On 1 December 2013, *Haaretz* newspaper revealed in an exclusive article that the settlement division of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO), an executive arm of the government in charge of settlement activities in the Galilee and the Naqab, is formulating a plan to settle 100,000 Jews in central Galilee. The article reported that the former aims to Judaize the Galilee in order to achieve a demographic balance with the Arab population and to give “expression to Israeli sovereignty through settlement activity,” as stated by the division.<sup>116</sup> “Sustaining the area and preserving our hold on it requires the continued development...to improve settlement continuity and enhance the demographic balance,” wrote the division in its letter to the planning authorities (Zafrir 2013).<sup>117</sup>

On 5 August 2008, the Housing Minister Ze’ev Boim announced that an accelerated plan for building the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish city of Harish in Wadi Ara should be underway.<sup>118</sup> Four years later, on 27 August 2012, *The Marker - Haaretz* business, finance and real-estate section - reported that the Housing Ministry and the Israel Land Administration (ILA) had announced in a press conference that they will start

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<sup>116</sup> Judaizing the Galilee is the term used by Israeli media and Palestinians alike in reference to building Jewish settlements and towns. *Haaretz* article in Hebrew uses the term. The English version of the article does not use it. See Zafrir, R. (2013) ‘The Settlement Unit Renewing the Judaization Plan for the Galilee’, *Haaretz* 1 December 2013. [Hebrew, online].

<sup>117</sup> The proposed plan for new settlements and the expansion of existing ones goes beyond the limits of the national master plan for development. For more information see Zafrir, R. (2013) ‘WZO Pushing New Jewish Towns to ‘Balance’ Arab Population in Israel’s North’, *Haaretz*, 1 December 2013. Available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/.premium-1.561052>

<sup>118</sup> The Palestinians of Wadi Ara, who constitute the majority of the region’s population, are against the new planned city. They are clear that the main objective behind it is to control and Judaize land around Palestinian localities to ghettoise them and reduce the chances of their future spatial expansion. The planned city “will turn the Palestinian localities in Wadi Ara into ghettos,” said an interviewee from the department of strategic planning in Umm al-Fahem (2 August 2009).

For more information on the planned city see the website of the Ministry of Construction and Housing: *The Establishment of the Haredi City of Hareesh*.

<http://www.moch.gov.il/spokesman/pages/doverlistitem.aspx?listid=5b390c93-15b2-4841-87e3-abf31c1af63d&webid=fe384cf7-21cd-49eb-8bbb-71ed64f47de0&itemid=65> [Hebrew].

publishing the first tenders for 5000 housing units in Harish. ILA's CEO, Bentzi Lieberman, declared in the same press conference that the city, with its 10,000 new housing units, was built to house the people of Israel. "These tenders belong to the entire people of Israel...The people of Israel are blessed that the government ministries continue with Zionism...", said Lieberman (Bouso 2012).<sup>119</sup>

In July 2009, the Housing Minister, Ariel Atias, warned against the spread of the Palestinian population, or the Arab population as he refers to them. Addressing Israel Bar Association which was debating reforming the ILA, the minister said: "I see [it] as a national duty to prevent the spread of a population that, to say the least, does not love the state of Israel...The mayor of Acre [mixed city of Jews and Arabs] visited me yesterday for three hours and asked me how his town could be saved...He told me 'bring a bunch of Haredis [ultra-orthodox Jews who are known for their high birth rate] and we'll save the city, even if I lose my political standing.' He told me that Arabs are living in Jewish buildings and running them out," *Haaretz* reported (Lieberman 2009).<sup>120</sup>

Israel's immediate past furnishes ample examples of its ethnic absolutist Manichaeian *nomos*, which is simultaneously exclusive and exclusionary both in ideology and

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<sup>119</sup> As the press conference was taking place members of the already existing 300 households of the local secular community of Harish were protesting against the plan, which they say is designed to house an ultra-orthodox community. For more information see Bouso, N. (2012) 'Harish was Inaugurated with more than 10,000 Units, Atias: Not just for Haredim', *the Marker*, 27 August 2012 [Hebrew]. Available at: <http://www.themarker.com/realestate/1.1810155>.

<sup>120</sup> In the same conference Atias called for segregation between religious and secular Jews. In promoting his view, the housing minister said: "I, as an ultra-Orthodox Jew, don't think that religious Jews should have to live in the same neighborhood as secular couples, so as to avoid unnecessary friction. And since some 5,000 to 6,000 religious couples get married every year, a problem arises because they require a certain kind of community life that goes along with their lifestyle" (Lieberman 2009).

practice. The High Court decision in relation to selection committees and *Haaretz* reports are not isolated examples. Rather, they are rooted and informed by Israel's founding Zionist ideology with its Manichaean inscriptions of "Jews only", which the chapter will later elaborate on. The reports illustrate and reveal both the nature and the challenges of the unfinished transformative Zionist project, whose underlying objective is excluding, compartmentalising and fragmenting the Palestinian existence on one hand, and the expansionism and consolidation of Jewish presence and domination over the same piece of land, on the other. They reveal the suspended dialectic of inclusion-exclusion, citizen-enemy status that Palestinians inside Israel inhabit and how they are perceived as a problem that needs to be controlled.<sup>121</sup> *Haaretz* reports demonstrate Israel's predicament that in order to survive as a Jewish state and a state for the Jews it has to continue with its relentless expansionist and colonising process both spatially and demographically.<sup>122</sup>

This is the framing political context in which Palestinians, their cities and villages found themselves. As illustrated in the opening quotation by a fieldwork interviewee, the character of the state and the question of the right to functioning substantive city and citizenship are inseparable. The chapter's departure point is that Umm al-Fahem's urban condition and materiality cannot be read and analysed myopically, that is by looking solely into its local history and local forces. While the project recognises that a city is an *oeuvre* as Lefebvre argued, a work in which all of its citizen participate

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<sup>121</sup> By inclusive exclusion I refer to the fact that Palestinians in Israel inhabit a state of the betwixt and between. Although they are citizens of the state, hence their inclusion, they are excluded from enjoying substantive citizenship. The chapter will elaborate on their exclusion from accessing land.

<sup>122</sup> As mentioned in footnote number 118, in the Israeli discourse the colonising process is often referred to as Judaization.



(Lefebvre 1991; Mitchell 2003: 17) and, therefore, the residents of Umm al-Fahem have their role in the way their city develops, the onus however is on the state as a centralised power to create the structural conditions which allow a city to function and provide for its residents' needs. Therefore, investigating Israel's history, its defining character, its ongoing and unfinished settler colonialism as well as its juridico-political order becomes indispensable to understanding the macro historical and structural forces that continue to shape and account for the very essence of the Palestinian city and citizenship, and their (un)making.

To help contextualise and conceptualise the Palestinian city in Israel, the chapter draws on Carl Schmitt's theory of the *nomos*.<sup>123</sup> In his book *The Nomos of the Earth* (2006 [1950]), Schmitt invokes the Greek concept of the *nomos*, which could also mean law, to deconstruct the relationship between the ordering of space, power and law. He provides a legal genealogy of the spatial ordering of the earth and elaborates on the history of colonial expansionism and how colonialism and power function. He explains how the *nomos* is about conquering the land, as much as it is about division of the land.

For Schmitt, although land-appropriation “constitutes the original spatial order, the source of all further concrete order and all further law” (2006: 48), and as such produces the possibility for the political, not every seizure of land is a *nomos* (ibid:

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<sup>123</sup> Although Carl Schmitt will always be remembered for his association with Nazi Germany and that his writings on sovereignty, politics and law provided justification for the authoritarian regime (Legg 2011: i), his concepts of the *nomos* and the state of exception prove insightful in deconstructing the relationship between spatial configurations and power. In recent years, especially after September 11, Carl Schmitt's work specifically around these two concepts gained currency among political theorists.

80). Appropriation, distribution and production are what make and define the *nomos* (ibid: 351). The *nomos* is “the measure by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated” (ibid: 70). It provides the concrete framework within which decisions of juridical order can be made. As he states “all the subsequent regulations of a written or unwritten kind derive their power from...*nomos*” (ibid: 78). As such the *nomos* constitutes the political and juridical basis of the state.

Moreover, Schmitt in his book elaborates on the system of the *rayas*, represented by the “amity line,” which divides the world into two: the civilised on one hand, and no-man’s-land on the other. In the former, the rule of law, treaties and legal truces are found. These exist mainly in Europe and are respected by European powers. In the no-man’s-land anarchy and lawlessness rule and every kind of predation is permitted. It is within this context that Schmitt’s *nomos* proves insightful to the way space was first imagined by the Zionist ideology, then concretely ordered, organised and legally anchored, especially after the establishment of Israel.

In anchoring its exclusive-exclusionary Manichaeian *nomos*, Israel relied on a plethora of strategies and campaigns, which “were at once political and military, economic and cultural” (Gregory 2004a: 78). It is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter to cover all of the aspects involved.<sup>124</sup> In what follows, I discuss the juridico-politico, cultural and spatial registers which constitute Israel’s *nomos* and which account for both the absencing of the Palestinian city and the production of what the thesis calls

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<sup>124</sup> Chapter 6, which covers spatial planning and zoning system and policies, provides another example of Israel’s Manichaeism. It demonstrates how this system is employed to spatially and demographically oppress the Palestinians on one hand, and expand and consolidate Jewish control on the other.

the suspended space and the suspended citizen. I also investigate the role of what Gilroy calls “ethnic absolutism”<sup>125</sup> plays in creating, legitimising and securing the Manichaean exclusive-exclusionary regime of as it unfolds in and through space, and which would lead to the tragic ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.<sup>126</sup>

As Israel’s *nomos* is inseparable from the pre-state Zionist project for the colonisation of Palestine and is in fact grounded in and informed by it, a historical overview of the latter becomes an absolute necessity.<sup>127</sup> It was during this period that Palestine was constructed and imagined as *terra nullius* and that Israel’s structure and foundation as a Jewish state and a state for the Jews was laid. Within the history of the pre-state Jewish settlement in Palestine, known as the *Yishuv*, I discuss the performativity of the Zionist discourse and ideology and how the constellation of knowledge and power worked to radically transform the Palestinian Arab geographical and cultural landscape into a Jewish one. I also discuss Tel Aviv, the first Hebrew City. Tel Aviv provides an excellent example that embodies not only the Manichaeism and ethnic-absolutism that govern the Zionist movement, but also relates to the urban question, which constitutes another foundational facet of the thesis, as discussed in chapter 3.

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<sup>125</sup> The concept of ethnic absolutism featured in numerous works and public talks by Gilroy, from as early as 1990s up to the present date. See for example, Gilroy, P. (1990) ‘Nationalism, History and Ethnic Absolutism’, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 30 (1), pp. 114-120.

<sup>126</sup> Ilan Pappé (2006) in his book *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* argues that 1948 was a premeditated war to ethnically cleanse Palestine of its Palestinian Arab population to establish a Jewish state with a Jewish majority.

<sup>127</sup> I am fully conscious that some would argue that the approach to the state and Zionism is deterministic, in the sense that Israel’s actions and policies follow the exigencies of Zionism, and therefore it is reductionist. They might argue that the situation on the ground is more complex, with which I agree, but there is a tendency, however, which can be traced back and which is identified and informed by the core pillars of Zionism.

The historical overview is followed by a discussion on how the newly established state of Israel, from 1948 up until the early 1960s, worked to officially institutionalise, legalise and therefore legitimise and consolidate its *nomos*, particularly in relation to land and demography. Land, and attracting world Jewry to settle in historic Palestine have been and still are the foundational and indispensable base for the realisation of Zionism and for maintaining the settler colonial character of Israel. These two components constitute the Manichaeic essence of Israel's *nomos*. They inform the very structure which functions to perpetuate the Palestinians' 'inclusive exclusion,' their suspended dialectic of citizens and enemies and which ensures that Israel is not a state for all its citizens.<sup>128</sup>

As far as literature is concerned, the chapter draws mostly on secondary resources relating specifically to Israel and Palestine. Six works are particularly useful in this regard. These are Theodor Herzl's (1988 [1896]) *The Jewish State*, Herzl's (1958) *The Diaries*, Meron Benvenisti's (2000) *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*, Ilan Pappé's (2006) *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Sabri Jiryis' (1976) *The Arabs in Israel*, and Edward Said's (1992) *The Question of Palestine*. When put together, the five different authors contribute to the analysis of the question of space, power, law, and spatial ordering, each in their own way nonetheless. The chapter also engages with critical theory and literature on (post)colonialism, performative geography, racism, culture and space. The few

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<sup>128</sup> By inclusive exclusion I refer to the fact that Palestinians in Israel inhabit a state of the betwixt and between. Although they are citizens of the state, hence their inclusion, they are excluded from enjoying substantive citizenship. The chapter will elaborate on their exclusion from accessing land.

primary resources are collected mainly from both *Haaretz* newspaper website and that of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset.

### **Zionism: From idea to state: deconstructing Zionist Manichaeism**

Emerging in the late nineteenth century Europe, at a critical historical conjuncture and changing global geopolitical configurations, Zionism with its aspirations for territorial acquisitions, cast as *terra nullius*, knew how to seize the opportunity arising from such circumstances. Western Europe, at the time, was at the peak of its insatiable appetite for colonial expansionism and nationalism. By 1878, western powers, with Britain and France in the lead, ruled over 67 per cent of the world's surface and by 1914 their direct colonial domination expanded to about 85 per cent of it (Said 1994: 6; 1995: 41). This era was also characterised by rising anti-Semitism against European Jews, culminating in persecution and pogroms, primarily in Russia and Poland. Therefore, by expressing the yearning for political self-determination and commitment to building a Jewish state, Zionism seemed to offer a neat answer to the Jewish question.

Palestine, occupying a unique spiritual and historical place in Judaism, seemed both the desired and most plausible place for the realisation of the idea of Zionism, and the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Realising the potential mobilising power of religious and spiritual links to the land, the land of Israel, the Zionists anchored their chauvinist ideology and discourse in the Old Testament. This allowed them to articulate their secular colonial aspirations as an “absolute right to reclaim...ancestral patrimony” (Benvenisti 2000: 2). “Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous

potency,” wrote Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism, in his book *The Jewish State* (1988 [1896]: 96).<sup>129</sup>

Moral and religious claims alone, however, were not enough to help establish their state. Palestine possessed additional concrete properties that made it the perfect choice for potentially realising their dream. Being geopolitically positioned at a crossroad between Asia and Africa, at a time of rising European imperialist powers and an ailing Ottoman Empire, Zionist leaders understood that they better align themselves with the rising powers, especially Britain. “We should ...remain in contact with Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence,” wrote Herzl (*ibid*: 96).

To summon support, Herzl embarked on a persuasion campaign that emphasised the material benefits Britain would reap from lending its support to the project.<sup>130</sup> When in 1903 Joseph Chamberlain, Britain’s Colonial Minister, offered Uganda to Herzl as the land where a Jewish state could be established, the latter replied “[o]ur base must be in or near Palestine” (1958: 383).<sup>131</sup> “We shall play the role of a small buffer-state. We shall attain this not through the good will but from the jealousy of the Powers.

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<sup>129</sup> Herzl was not the first to articulate the idea of re-establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. He was, however, both an intellectual and an activists working to promote the Zionist project and was the first to address international political forces as well as the world Jewry. “Herzl...wrote as a Jew who was a man of the world, an experienced political observer, a ranking journalist with international horizons; and his *Jewish State* was directed as much to the Bismarcks and Rothschilds as to the common reader,” wrote Lowenthal in the introduction to Herzl’s diaries (Herzl, Lowenthal 1958: xx). The *Jewish state* “would have remained one more Zionist tract...had Herzl been a man content with words. He was in fact, over and beyond his literary bent, intrinsically a man of action and action on a grand scale...he conceived of the *Jewish State* not as a subject for discourse...but as something to be acted upon by others and first of all himself” (*ibid*:xx-xxi).

<sup>130</sup> For details on Herzl’s efforts at trying to convince European powers to support the Jewish state, see Herzl, Th., Lowenthal, M. (1958) *The Diaries*. London: Gollancz (book translated and edited by Marvin Lowenthal).

<sup>131</sup> Chamberlain was “the most talked-of as well as one of the most influential figures in the British cabinet” (1958: 373).

And when we are under the Union Jack at El Arish, then Palestine too will fall into the ‘British sphere of influence,’ said Herzl to Chamberlain (ibid 383-384).<sup>132</sup>

Addressing Britain again, Herzl wrote:

England with her possessions in Asia should be most interested in Zionism, for the shortest route to India is by way of Palestine. England’s great politicians were the first to recognise the need for colonial expansion ... And so I believe in England the idea of Zionism, which is a colonial idea, should be easily understood.

(Quoted in Rose 1986)

Chaim Weizmann, a Zionist leader and successor of Herzl, continued the campaign to secure British political establishment support. Within two years of his relocation to England, taking Manchester as his base, he had managed to meet with the former Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour; a meeting which within a few years would prove decisive in defining and shaping the modern history of Palestine. Speaking the language of concrete interests, in 1914, Weizmann wrote a piece for the *Manchester Guardian*, one of the most influential newspapers of the time, stating the role a Jewish state in Palestine could play in safeguarding British imperialist interests:

Should Palestine fall within the British sphere of influence and should Britain encourage Jewish settlement there, as a British dependency, we could have in twenty to thirty years a million Jews out there, perhaps more; they would develop the country, bring back civilisation, form a very effective guard for the Suez Canal.

(Quoted in Quigley 1990: 8)

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<sup>132</sup> This was Herzl’s reply to Chamberlain’s worry that British interests were diminishing in that part of the world and that a dispute over the region might arise between France, Germany and Russia which would question the fate of the Jewish colony, should it have been established there. For more details see Herzl meeting with Chamberlain in London, April 1903 in *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (1958: 382-384). El Areesh then was under British rule while Palestine was still under the Ottomans.

Three years later, in 1917, Balfour who was now Britain's Foreign Minister had formalised his country's sponsorship of Zionism. After gaining the approval of his cabinet, Balfour sent a letter to the powerful Lord Rothschild, head of the Zionist Federation in Britain, stating that Britain "viewed with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" (Ibid).

### **A reservoir of geographical and cultural imaginaries: The production of emptiness**

The establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine would have gone unchallenged, if the same piece of land was not already populated by a people who had been living there for centuries. The Palestinian Arabs, the inhabitants of the desired land, posed a challenge to the realisation of the exclusive-exclusionary colonial project. The Zionists, adhering to and deriving their authority from their narrative of Jewish-only righteousness to Palestine; a land promised to them by God, set out not only to deny the existence of Palestine, first discursively and then materially by following a policy of facts on the grounds, but also to prove that they were the ones who knew best how to "make the desert bloom."

Following the footsteps of colonial powers, Zionism excelled at manufacturing what Mbembe (2003: 24) described as a large reservoir of cultural and spatial imaginaries to give meaning and legitimacy to their colonial conquest.<sup>133</sup> This proved profitable as the Zionists mastered a language that not only appealed to European colonial powers

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<sup>133</sup> One of the differences between the Zionists superior colonial discourse and that of European powers lies in the fact that the Zionists saw the land of Palestine as solely belonging to them, with no room for its indigenous Palestinian population. The civilising mission for them was aimed at the land, which was portrayed as desolate and in a state of negligence, thus awaiting redemption and modernisation.



but also was congruent with the way the latter constructed and defined the rest of the world. It was a language enmeshed with racial supremacy and hierarchy, and the power to define the other as inferior, backward, unworthy of consideration, and even non-existent.

Literature on colonialism affirms the indispensable role such imaginaries played in legitimising colonial projects. Carl Schmitt (2006 [1950]) noted in his book *The Nomos of the Earth* how denying indigenous populations human qualities served a practical goal. It facilitated the grounds for “obtaining a legal title for the great land-appropriation” and the “subjugating” of the local populations (Schmitt 2006: 103). Edward Said (1994) in *Culture and Imperialism* also argued that colonialism and imperialism are not reducible to the “simple act of accumulation and acquisition” (Said 1994: 8) They are legitimated, justified and supported by discursive infrastructure and systems of knowledge that are mobilised for the construction of cultural and geographical imaginaries which (re)present certain territories and certain people in need of domination and redemption. For him “[t]he power to conquer territory is only in part a matter of physical force: there is the strong moral and intellectual component making the conquest itself secondary to an idea, which dignifies (and indeed hastens) pure force with arguments drawn from science, morality, ethics, and general philosophy” (Said 1992: 77).

“A land without a people, for people without a land,” was the Zionist slogan for Palestine. This slogan, whether meant literally or rhetorically, not only did it epitomise the denial and dehumanisation of the Palestinian presence, but also undermined Palestinians’ very right to be there and belong to the land. When acknowledging that there was a native population, those were deemed unworthy of

being there. They were “ignoble or perhaps dispensable natives” (Said 1992: 81), who neglected the land and did not know how to appreciate it. “It seems as if God has covered the soil of Palestine with rocks and marshes and sand, so that its beauty can only be brought out by those who love it and will devote their lives to healing its wounds,” wrote Chaim Weizmann (quoted *ibid*: 85). For the Zionists, Palestinians were “either not there or savages or both” (*ibid*: 90).

The production of emptiness went hand in hand with the narrative that Palestine was a land awaiting redemption. “[I]t is a poor country, but we mean to make something out of it,” said Herzl to Chamberlain (Herzl 1958: 383). A Jewish state in Palestine would not only “form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism,” as Herzl wrote in his book the *Jewish State* (1988: 96) but would also transform the “desolate” “poor land” into a modern oasis.<sup>134</sup> Its colonisation was discursively presented as “a fact of repetition: The Jews were not supplanting, destroying, breaking up a native society.” They were restoring, “rebuilding” and “reconstituting” their “lost father land” (Said 1992: 13, 68).<sup>135</sup> The backward local population was the one at odds with the natural landscape. As Winston Churchill put it in his testimony to the Peel Commission in 1937, “[t]he

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<sup>134</sup> Herzl arriving into Palestine in 1898 describes the land as desolate and Jaffa as poor and miserable, “full of beggars and spies” (1958: 296). He wrote in his diaries on 27 Oct 1898 “[w]e approached the land of our fathers with mingled feelings. It is strange what emotions this desolate country evokes in most people...Here we are in Jaffa: again poverty and misery and heat in gay colours. Confusion in the streets; at the hotel, not a carriage to be had” (1958: 278-279). On 5 November 1898, Herzl wrote about how unsafe and isolated from the world he felt. “Among the unaccustomed circumstances of our journey is my ignorance since October 19 of what has been happening in the world. Newspapers are non-existent in these parts, telegrams take four or five days, letters are delivered at whim- or not” (*ibid*: 296).

<sup>135</sup> In *The Jewish State*, the founding pamphlet for Zionism and the Zionist state, the Palestinians do not feature at all. Ella Shohat (2010) in her book on Israeli and pre-state cinema discusses how the Zionist film *Oded the wanderer* from 1932, presents Palestine as a land empty of its Palestinian population.

injustice is when those who live in the country leave it to be desert for thousands of years,” (quoted in Gregory 2004a: 82).<sup>136</sup>

In what follows, I discuss Tel Aviv, the first Hebrew city to be built in Palestine and how it performed the uncompromising, exclusive-exclusionary Manichaean ethos of Zionism both discursively and materially this time. The building of Tel Aviv put the idea and vision into action. The modern city to be built was articulated not only as the complete contrast to the squalor of Jaffa, but also as its competitor, with its ultimate aim to overtake it. As Weizmann wrote in *Trial and Error*, Tel Aviv was to be built with the aim “to outstrip, in size and in economic importance, the ancient town of Jaffa, and to become one of the metropolitan centres of the eastern Mediterranean” (quoted in Said 1992: 93).

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<sup>136</sup> The Peel Commission was sent to Palestine to investigate the Palestinian Rebellion of 1936. In 1937, Chaim Weizmann, then president of the World Zionist Organisation, told the Commission that the revolt was “...the old war of the desert against civilization...on one side, the forces of destruction, the forces of the desert, have arisen, and on the other side stand firm the forces of civilization and building” (quoted in Gregory 2004a: 81-81). Such rhetoric of civilisation and modernity left an immense impression on Churchill whose position is reflected in the above-mentioned statement that appears in the body of the text. For more information on Churchill’s support of Zionism see Gilbert, M. (2008) *Churchill and the Jews: a Lifelong Friendship*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

## Tel Aviv: The First Hebrew City, the building of a modern oasis<sup>137</sup>

I did not go to Jerusalem, to Tel Aviv or to any of the coastal cities, but everybody speaks of them as part of Europe in the organization, their green, their factories, and their produce. They moved forward as fast as they could and made sure that we would keep moving backward.

Barghouti (2005: 147)<sup>138</sup>

Azaryahu (2007), in his book *Tel Aviv: A Mythography of a City*, which is concerned with the mythic, symbolic and agency of Tel Aviv and its representation in newspapers during the 1920s, 30s and 40s, traces the genesis of the idea of building a Jewish-only city to 1904. The idea was first put forward by Eliezer ben-Yehuda, in honour of Theodor Herzl, who died in the same year. Ben-Yehuda, known as the driving force behind the revival of the Hebrew language, suggested a neighbourhood or a town be built in Jerusalem where everyone spoke Hebrew and only Hebrew; “its population will be 100 percent Hebrew, Hebrew will be spoken here, where purity and cleanliness will reign, and [where] we will not follow the ways of the gentile nations” (quoted *ibid*: 37).

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<sup>137</sup>The Hebrew city is not my terminology. It is taken from Azaryahu’s (2007) book. The Hebrew character of the city was not only a matter of language but demography as well (Azaryahu 2007: 72). Ella Shohat notes that the word Hebrew in the *Yishuv* era entered the Zionist lexicon to refer to the Jews in Palestine, “thus implying a break with Diaspora Jewry, and indicating both a connection to the historical past in Eretz Israel and to the renewed nationality with the old/new language,” (2010: 26). At that time “Hebrew man” was the predecessor of “Israeli” (*ibid*).

<sup>138</sup> Mourid Barghouti is a Palestinian poet who was not allowed back into Palestine before 1993. In 1966, when Barghouti was twenty-two he left his village to continue his studies in Cairo. A year later, in 1967, the six-days war broke out and Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Since, as the case with the many thousands of Palestinians who happened to be outside of the West Bank before the war, Barghouti was denied entry back. Only after the Oslo accords were signed in 1993, Barghouti and others were allowed back into their homeland.

Two years later, in 1906, Akiva Arie Weiss wrote in a prospectus urging Jews to buy land to build: “let us build us a city in Israel” (ibid: 37),<sup>139</sup> “a city, which would be for Israel, what New York was to America” (Centennial Celebration of Tel Aviv 2009).<sup>140</sup> The city to be built was not only Jewish but also modern. “[I]n this city we will install paved streets with electric lights. Every house will have running water installed, which will flow through the pipes just like in any modern European city, and a sewage disposal system will also be installed to the benefit of the city and its dwellers,” wrote Weiss in his prospectus (quoted in Azaryahu 2007: 58).

In 1909, the envisioned town to be named Tel Aviv was not built in Jerusalem but adjacent to Jaffa: then the only city where “a solid import-export trade was growing up with its related branches...” and where a relatively large number of Jewish immigrants chose to reside (Katz 1986:45). Starting off as a Jewish suburb of Jaffa, Tel Aviv soon witnessed a rapid growth, both spatially and demographically, a process that accelerated under the British rule. In less than twenty years, its population increased from 15,000 in 1922 to 130,000 in 1939 (Azaryahu 2007: 33). In 1921, the city had its own Jewish police force, which represented “a realization of the rather abstract Jewish National Home promised to the Jews in the Balfour Declaration

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<sup>139</sup> The prospectus was dated Tish’a Be’Av. In Hebrew, this date is symbolic. It commemorates the destruction of the Jewish temples in Jerusalem first by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E., then by the Romans 70 C.E. The date, thus, symbolises “the transition from destruction to redemption, a powerful idea in Jewish liturgy” (Azaryahu, 2007: 37).

<sup>140</sup> April 1st, 2009, [Conference launches Centennial celebrations](http://www.telaviv-fever.com), in [www.telaviv-fever.com](http://www.telaviv-fever.com) .

of 1917” (ibid: 64). A year later, in 1922 it was granted a municipal status and was declared a city in 1934.<sup>141</sup>

Declaring Tel Aviv a city was not a nominal gesture. It meant that it was now politically independent from Jaffa and was run entirely by Jews. For the Zionists this also “concretized the Jewish National Home in British Mandate Palestine in territorial and institutional terms” (ibid: 35). “Tel Aviv is an epitome, an example and a model, and you, the sons of Tel Aviv, are the embodiment, the ideal embodied in the Land of Israel. This is a gracious creation of the Zionist spirit... [a] fine symbol of a Jewish state ... that proved even to the greatest skeptics that the Jews are able to build a life for themselves and to conduct their affairs in an orderly and disciplined manner,” asserted journalist and Zionist leader Nachum Sokolov (quoted in Azaryahu: 2007: 35: 64).

The political independence was soon to be followed by economic independence. In 1936, ensuing the Palestinians’ rebellion and Jaffa’s port strike, the Mandate government authorised the building of the long-awaited port of Tel Aviv. The port, as well as substantively materialising the city’s independence, signified the ascendance of Tel Aviv and the decline of Jaffa. For the Zionists it ushered in a new era and a significant development in their national project. The new port, dubbed as “[t]he First Hebrew Port,” “Zion gate,” and “the gate to Zion” (Azaryahu 2007: 65:66) was not only of economic value but also of symbolic and potential independence.

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<sup>141</sup> The first Hebrew City was soon recognised by European imperialist countries. In 1925, Dizengoff, the mayor of Tel Aviv, as Azaryahu (2007:38) notes, was invited to represent Tel Aviv at an international congress of mayors in Paris.

For Ben-Gurion, the port represented the “Hebrew access to the sea” and the “conquest of the sea,” which was the next phase awaiting the Zionists (ibid 65: 269).<sup>142</sup> The port opened its gates to passengers in 1938. In 23 February 1938, *Haaretz* wrote: “A port not only for itself [Tel Aviv] and for the country, but also for the Diaspora and for those who return to the homeland...” (ibid: 66). Menchaem Ussishkin, then head of the JNF, explaining the rationale behind the name, said: “I give this name to the port that will serve the redeemed on their way to the historical Zion, the real Zion, the eternal Zion” (quoted ibid). The port, celebrated by poets, artists, intellectuals and post-cards was graphically eternalised in Tel Aviv’s city’s official emblem: “[depicting] a lighthouse built as an open gate and spreading rays of light” (ibid: 66-67).

### **The city of wonders: a concrete answer to a concrete challenge**

The city of Tel Aviv, planned in the spirit of garden cities, was impressively modern. Its achievements and uniqueness were reflected in speeches by foreign dignitaries who visited the city in 1920s and 1930s. The first British High Commissioner of Palestine, Herbert Samuel, praising Tel Aviv in his farewell speech which also took place in the city said: “Tel Aviv is Palestine’s city of wonders. One may compare it with the miraculous cities of the tales of the Arabian Nights, which blossom overnight in the desert” (quoted in Azaryahu: 2007: 39).

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<sup>142</sup> What Ben-Gurion referred to as the “conquest of the sea,” Carl Schmitt in his book *The Nomos of the Earth* called “sea-appropriations,” which “became possible only at a later stage in the development of human means of power and human consciousness of space” (Schmitt 2006 [1950]: 44).

The success story was, among other things, manifested in its commercial fairs, especially that of 1929. In his speech, Meir Dizengoff,<sup>143</sup> Tel Aviv's first mayor, addressing the audience which also included the British High Commissioner, said: "[t]he time of the exhibition coincides with the twentieth anniversary of Tel Aviv, which is a permanent demonstration and a living exhibition of everything that Jewish pioneers can accomplish when they enjoy freedom of action while building the national home in their homeland" (Azaryahu, 2007: 37, 45).<sup>144</sup> The Jubilee celebrations of the city of 1934 were also held at the time of another commercial fair.

*Haaretz* reporting the event wrote:

The Exhibition is a fine framework for the silver jubilee, a superb center for the celebrations. The exhibition and the Levant Fair are evidence of the power of creation and the future of Tel Aviv, convincing proof of what Jewish energy has brought about on the desert sands in this forsaken corner of Asia, of the economic and cultural achievements and future development. The Tel Aviv festival is a festival of new Hebrew creativity, a symbol and guarantee of Hebrew revival in the old-new homeland.

(Quoted *ibid*: 46)

Tel Aviv, however, was not only built to serve as the theatre through which Zionism performed its colonial modernity and superiority in Palestine and as a proof that Zionists were capable of materialising their dream. The very idea of the city offered a concrete answer to a concrete, existential question; that is how best to attract Jews to

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<sup>143</sup>Dizengoff was known as "the builder of the First Hebrew City since the destruction of the Second Temple" (Azaryahu 2007: 37).

<sup>144</sup>The fair was called "Palestine Fair," despite the conspicuous absence of Palestinian exhibitors, a matter which made the Palestinian reporter of the newspaper of *Falastin* wonder why the fair was not called "English and Zionist Fair," and whether such absence was because of the inferiority of Palestinian industry or the lack of competence they had when compared with their Jewish competitors (*ibid* 46).



come and settle in Palestine. For without Jewish immigration to Palestine, the project could not be materialised.

As early as the twentieth century when the Zionist immigration into Palestine was more ideological with messianic goals, immigrants preferred not to live in the agricultural colonies, which for Zionism were considered “the only means of strengthening the Jewish foothold in Palestine” (Katz 1986:404). Katz (ibid) notes that the Jewish population of the 25 agricultural colonies that were built all over Palestine, from 1882 to 1905, did not exceed the total number of 7,000. Meanwhile, Jaffa’s Jewish immigrant population of the same period was over 7,000. Jaffa’s commercial and social advantages, being an open, cosmopolitan city, were attractive to Jewish immigrants. Jaffa ”...unlike Jerusalem, the centre of orthodox Jewry, which opposed all new social ideas including Zionism...was not as orthodox as Jerusalem and was readier to accept new ideas” (ibid: 45).

Against this objective reality, the fathers of Zionism soon realised they could not rest their national project on agriculture alone and that “trade and industry must be developed within a framework of improved urban settlement” (Katz 1986:404) They recognised that “the greater part of the potential Jewish immigrants to Palestine were urban dwellers who could far more easily be integrated into industry in the towns than

into agricultural labor” (ibid). To attract such immigrants, the city was not only to be Jewish but also modern, hygienic and with a functioning urban infrastructure.<sup>145</sup>

### **Tel Aviv vs. Jaffa: Manichaeic couplets<sup>146</sup>**

By resorting to a traditional colonial, supremacist portrayal of oriental cities and in justification of building a pure modern and hygienic Jewish city, the Zionists promoted Jaffa’s housing conditions and infrastructure as not up to European standards. As David Smilansky, one of Tel Aviv founders put it: “[t]he narrow lanes of Jaffa were infamous for their dirt, where humans and animals resided together. And in addition to the dirt were noise and commotion, the shouts of Arabs praising their merchandise. Anyone coming from a modern European city found it hard to adjust to these living conditions,” (quoted in parts in Katz 1986; in Azaryahu 2007: 58).

Meir Dizengoff admitting that ideology alone was not enough of a reason for Jews, especially those of middle class backgrounds, to immigrate, said: “life in the narrow, dirty lanes was very difficult, and even the burning love for Zion could not distract from the dirt and the trachoma and the lack of light” (quoted in Azaryahu 2007: 58). The houses to be built would offer “good hygienic conditions for the middle class” (ibid). Dizengoff retrospectively commenting on the rationale behind Tel Aviv said:

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<sup>145</sup> Urban centres were and still are even today 66 years after the establishment of Israel and 132 years since the first *Aliyah* in 1882, an answer and a challenge for the settler colonial project.

<sup>146</sup> This subsection takes inspiration from Frantz Fanon’s description of the colonial city and the native city. In his canonical book the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1969) describes the nature of the Manichaeic order of colonialism and how it is inscribed in the urban landscape. In this order the colonial city is praised for its modernity, spaciousness, hygiene and light, while the other is repulsed for its backwardness, crowdedness, filth and darkness. For more detail on the colonial city see chapter 3 on the city and public space.

“[Our aim was] to build a new Hebrew neighbourhood outside the city [Jaffa], with all the amenities and comforts that civilized human beings needed” (quoted *ibid*: 58).

With the building of Tel Aviv, orientalist Manichaean representations intensified. Tel Aviv and Jaffa were articulated as binary opposites. Tel Aviv’s success and achievements within a short period of time were often contrasted with the ill fate and filthiness of Jaffa. Tel Aviv was “a city that Europe can envy,” and the difference between the two [Jaffa and Tel Aviv] was one of “light and darkness, civilization and ignorance,” wrote a French journalist in the 1930s (*Yediot Iriyat Tel Aviv* 1934-1936, 393, quoted in Azaryahu 2007: 59). “Tel Aviv ... a splinter of Europe has flown away and found its way here. And beyond the gates of Tel Aviv a black night is clinging to the soil of ancient Arabia,” wrote a journalist in 1920s, who also expressed how impressed he was by the electric light and motor cars in the streets of the city (quoted *ibid*: 59).

The building of the first Hebrew city was politically, symbolically, and materially important. But, it was only one part of the project. The Zionist project saw the entire Mandatory Palestine as a terrain in need of reclaiming and restoring Jewish proprietorship. In what follows I describe another mechanism which was used for reinforcing the Zionist narrative and for asserting exclusive rights to the land. The constellation of knowledge and power was mobilised to the process of claiming proprietorship over land and to manufacturing spatial evidence that Palestine truly belonged to the Jewish people.

## **To name is to take: ruling by details**

A land-appropriation is constituted only if the appropriator is able to give the land a name.

(Schmitt 2006 [1950]: 348)

In a name and in name-giving, a third orientation of power takes effect: the tendency to visibility, publicity, and ceremony.

(Ibid: 349)

After all, naming is a declaration of exclusive proprietorship, and making such a claim over one's homeland is the essence of nationalism.

(Benvenisti: 2000: 47)

Motivated by an ideology governed by ethnic absolutism, the Zionists engaged in campaigns with the ultimate aim of radically eradicating the existing human and physical geography and the creation instead of a new spatial reality on the ground. Almost three decades before the lead up to the violent ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, they started to methodologically survey the landscape to create a body of, mainly but not solely geographical, knowledge about the ancestral land. The underlying aim was to establish an exclusively Jewish proprietorship over the land and to domesticate it for military and political purposes.

Aware of the power cartography can possess; symbolically and politically as well as militarily, they began to clandestinely work on two separate but not mutually exclusive projects. The first project, started in the 1920s, was the production of a Hebrew map of the land that would include assigning Hebrew names to topography

and settlements. Here again Schmitt proves insightful. As quoted above (2006: 348-9), conquering a territory is not enough to make it the property of its conqueror. Naming it is what gives it legitimacy and visibility. It is the essence of nationalism, as put by Benvenisti (ibid). The second project was the meticulous study and documentation of almost every Palestinian village: its physical and social structure, economy, political activism, and the smallest detail of its way of life; a project which started in 1930s and intensified throughout the 1940s.

### **The Hebrew map<sup>147</sup>**

The production of the Hebrew map was a strategic decision. It was not a technical exercise but “an act of establishing proprietorship” (Benvenisti 2000: 14). The map was instrumental to the transition from the discursive symbolic possession of land to a tangible, material possession. The Zionists, who were ideologically motivated and in a position of power in terms of possessing the necessary knowledge of surveying the land, understood that maps were not only a representation of a spatial reality but could also anticipate and create the desired reality.<sup>148</sup> They understood that they were a model for rather than a model of what they claimed to represent, and as such had

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<sup>147</sup> The title is taken from Meron Benvenisti's (2000) book.

<sup>148</sup> On the power of the map and territorial codification and their role in anticipating and creating spatial realities and the building of a modern nation: see Winichakul Th. (1994) *Siam Mapped: History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Through invoking the concept of geo-body Winichakul shows that the map is not objective. It is a man-made invention that creates a supposed spatial reality not vice versa. In the context of Siam, mapping “created a new Siam- a new entity whose geo-body had never existed before” (1994:130). He asserts that the geo-body actively takes part in producing new ideas, new values, and new culture and goes even beyond its primary task of spatial definition (ibid: 137).

performative qualities, that is producing the effects they name.<sup>149</sup> Operating in a colonial context where those who had the power to survey and define also had the power to appropriate, dispossess and claim ownership, made it easier for the Zionists to pursue their plans.<sup>150</sup>

To Hebraise the landscape, joining British Mandatory official surveying offices and setting up exclusively Jewish mechanisms allowed them to carry out the task. In 1914, the Society for the Reclamation of Antiques, later named, Israel Exploration Society (IES), was established. Its members included professional geographers, cartographers, historians and archaeologists as well as high-ranking political leaders (Benvenisti 2000:11). Its declared objective was “to further historical, geographical and archaeological research concerning the Land of Israel” (Israel Exploration Society 2014).<sup>151</sup> Its undeclared objectives, however, were clearly political. Its members sought to “articulate the Jewish ambition to lay claim to the ancestral land” and provide not only a “concrete documentation of the continuity of a historical thread that remained unbroken from the time of Johua Bun Nun...” (Benvenisti: 12), but also “to concretize the military, political, and symbolic possession of the patrimony of the Jewish people” (ibid: 14).

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<sup>149</sup> On geographical performativity see Gregory, D. (2004a) *Colonial Present* and Gregory D. (2004b) ‘Palestine and the War on Terror’, *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24:1: 183-195.

<sup>150</sup> There exists a body of literature that takes a critical approach to dealing with the role cartography played in colonial expansionism and domination. See, for example, Godlewska A. & Smith, N. (1994) *Geography and Empire*, Burnett, D. (2000) *Masters of all they surveyed*.

<sup>151</sup> For more information see: <http://israelexplorationsociety.huji.ac.il> .

In 1920, shortly after the British assumed authority over Palestine, two Zionist scholars joined the survey departments of the British Mandatory government and the British army as advisors “on all matters relating to the assignment of Hebrew names...” (Benvenisti 2000: 12). For them, working at offices with strategic importance was a prime Zionist act. They fought hard to convince the British authorities “to restore biblical Hebrew place-names to the map of the country in place of the Arabic ones” which were in use (ibid). When their efforts were limited in success, they set about identifying biblical and post-biblical sites to put them on Hebrew maps, which were being clandestinely produced. In addition to this invaluable task, their work had also allowed them to access military data, which they then passed to the Jewish underground militia, the *Haganah*. The received data was copied in clandestine cartographic offices to produce Hebrew maps that would be available for the *Haganah* military operations.

The Jewish National Fund (JNF), the key organisation with the purpose of acquiring land in Palestine by any means necessary, was another mechanism through which the Judaizing task was to be fulfilled. In 1925, the JNF set up its own Naming Committee. The committee was recognised by the British authorities, but was allowed to give Hebrew names only to communities established on land owned by the JNF. The JNF, despite its efforts to persuade the Mandatory authorities to “redeem the ancient Hebrew names,” managed to give Hebrew names to only 5 per cent of the names appearing on official Mandatory maps (Benvenisti 2000: 25). The remaining 95 per cent were all in Arabic. With maps being both symbols and instruments of power, it was not surprising that during the British Mandate the authority to draw

official maps and assign names to topographical features was kept as a British exclusive right.

After the establishment of Israel in 1948, members of the IES and the JNF naming committee, together with the two scholars who were working for the British surveying office would all play an invaluable role in the official Judaizing project. This time not clandestinely but proudly under the official support of the newly established state. In July 1949, shortly after the Israeli army had consolidated its control over the Naqab and the Arava, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion summoned nine scholars to his office, who were associated with the pre-state naming mechanisms, to set up the Negev Naming Committee (NNC). In a letter sent to the chair of the committee, Ben-Gurion wrote: “[w]e are obliged to remove the Arabic names for reasons of state. Just as we do not recognize the Arabs’ political proprietorship of the land, so also do we not recognize their spiritual proprietorship and their names” (quoted in Benvenisti 2000: 14).

Within the space of ten months, the committee managed to compile the entire map and present it to the public (ibid). The sense of urgency with which the members of NNC worked was indicative of the importance of both the map and the (re)naming of sites in establishing facts on the ground, asserting ownership and providing the new colonial order with visibility and legitimacy. As Schmitt insightfully notes, land-appropriation is concretised only when the appropriator is able to give it a name (Schmitt 2006: 248). With naming as he puts it: “abstractions cease to exist and the situation becomes concrete,” (ibid: 349). For the Palestinians, the Zionist (re)naming of the landscape concretised their dispossession and obliterated both their physical



and symbolic existence on the land, even if the majority of the new Hebrew names had their roots in Arabic.

### **The village dossiers: preparing for the glorious day**

Edward Said noted in *the Question of Palestine* that the effectiveness of Zionism lay in its ability to see “not only what was there, but what *could* be there” and “*in its being a policy of detail*, not simply a general colonial vision” (Said 1992: 94-95 [original emphasis]). This “discipline of detail” was something the Palestinians had no answer to. The Palestinians, who spoke a language of generalities, assumed that by living there and by legally owning their land, this would simply guarantee that the land was theirs and that they would live there forever.

Knowledge, yet again, was mobilised to promote the Zionist project and to help transform it from a vision into reality. This time this was to be achieved through working towards domesticating the Palestinian Arab landscape by studying it and producing a body of knowledge about it. The Zionists understood that they could not afford to keep the land *terra incognita*. Therefore, as well as establishing facts on the ground, a policy which had been part of Zionism’s *modus operandi*, they engaged in the village files’ project to document the Palestinian way of life so that when the opportunity would arise to materialise their exclusively Jewish state, they would be prepared.

The village files' project was suggested by Ben-Zion Luria, a historian from the Hebrew University, who also worked for the Jewish Agency.<sup>152</sup> He suggested that the JNF undertake the responsibility of carrying out a detailed inventory of Palestinian villages. The proposed project, as he put in a letter to the JNF, "would greatly help the redemption of the land" (quoted in Pappé 2006:17). Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, a historian and a prominent Zionist leader who would become the second president of Israel, wrote in a letter to the Jewish Agency that the project should also include exposing the "Hebraic origins" of each village (ibid: 18). The JNF was more than happy to endorse the idea and declare it a "national project" (ibid: 18).

Professionals were summoned to carry out the project. One of them, also from the Hebrew University, was a cartographer who worked for the Mandatory surveying department. He suggested recruiting professional photographers who would also take aerial photographs of the villages. The project included not only mapping the topographical location and features, including access to roads and quality of land, but recording every single aspect of the villages' socio-political and economic life. Descriptions of husbandry, cultivated land and workshops were all included. Particular attention was also given to levels of hostility towards Zionism and engagement in 1936 rebellion (Pappé 2006).

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<sup>152</sup> The Hebrew University, founded in 1918 and officially opened in 1925 ([www.huji.ac.il](http://www.huji.ac.il)), was established to serve political objectives. Menachem Ussishkin (1863-1941), who was at the time head of the JNF and the driving force behind the establishment of the university, wrote: "[n]ot for the sake of a spiritual center did I make my call, but for the political strengthening of our position in this land. A spiritual center without a political center is a head without a body" (quoted in Benvenisti 2000: 26).

Domesticating the landscape through the village dossiers had clear military objectives. The *Yishuv*'s intelligence services, alarmed by the inadequate available material on the Palestinian community, were among those who pushed for "the systematic in-depth study of the Arab community of Eretz Israel/Palestine in all aspects of its life and livelihood" (quoted in Benvenisti 2000: 71). A member of the *Haganah*, Moshe Pasternal, who took an active part in collecting data, recalled:

We had to study the basic structure of the Arab village. This means the structure and how best to attack it. In the military schools, I had been taught how to attack a modern European city, not a primitive village in the Near East....

(Quoted in Pappé 2006: 19).

It was thanks to the detailed knowledge of the happenings in each village that the Zionist military command concluded in November 1947 "that the Palestine Arabs had nobody to organise them properly," and the British were the only obstacle at the time for the Zionists to fully materialise their project (quoted in Pappé 2006:23). In December 1947 and throughout the first half of 1948, the completed village files' project proved instrumental to the active displacement and expulsion of the Palestinians, or the ethnic cleansing of Palestine as Pappé (2006) prefers to call it, which facilitated the creation of a Jewish state with an absolute Jewish majority.

## The unmaking of Palestine: the making of the Jewish state

Every new age and every new epoch in the coexistence of peoples, empires, and countries, of rulers and power formations of every sort, is founded on new spatial divisions, new enclosures, and new spatial orders of the earth.

(Schmitt 2006:79)

1948 ushered into the world a new *nomos*. This *nomos* simultaneously introduced a rupture in the existing socio-spatial and political order and laid the foundation for a new one. Palestine existed no more, and Israel was founded on its ruins. By the end of the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine about 800,000 Palestinians, who made up more than half of the native population, had been displaced, 531 villages had been uprooted and destroyed and about eleven urban centres had been emptied (Pappé 2006: xiii).<sup>153</sup>

The newly declared Jewish state, as a result, was now in control of 78 per cent of British Mandate Palestine (Kedar 2000-2001: 945; Yiftachel 2006: 137). However, only 13.5 per cent of the land, inherited from Jewish organisations and individuals as well as British Mandatory authorities, was under state or Jewish ownership (ibid).

As a newly founded state and the internationally recognised sole sovereign of the land, Israel set out to officially and concretely institutionalise and legalise its Manichaean *nomos*, with little or no concern of being legally or politically challenged. Securing its exclusive control over the seized land, and ensuring an absolute Jewish majority, thus transforming both the physical and human landscape,

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<sup>153</sup> Although there is no exact figure of how many villages were destroyed, many agree that the number was over 400. Jiryis (1976: 79) notes that 45 per cent of all Palestinian localities disappeared after the creation of Israel.

were its overall guiding objectives. More specifically these objectives included the following: dispossessing the Palestinians, including those who remained, of their land and transferring it to state and Jewish hands in ways that would make it difficult, or even impossible for the former to claim the land back, preventing the return of Palestinian refugees, and ensuring that Israel would always be a Jewish state and a state of the Jews, not a state of all its citizens. In what follows, I describe some of the key laws which constitute the legal apparatus that Israel created to support, legitimise and anchor its *nomos* in line with those objectives.

### **Jewish state: Jewish land: the legal consolidation of Israel's Manichaean *nomos***

We, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the united Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the state of Israel ... We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the diaspora to rally around the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream, the redemption of Israel.

Israel's declaration of independence<sup>154</sup>

By defining itself a Jewish state and a state for the Jews, Israel set the boundaries of membership to be exclusively in the Jewish people, thus structurally hierarchising and racialising both space and citizenship. The production of boundaries in such irreconcilable form was institutionalised soon after the establishment of Israel in a

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<sup>154</sup> To view the entire declaration please visit:  
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>

number of laws which simultaneously secured the structural exclusion of the Palestinians, on one hand, and the permanent inclusion of the world Jewry into the very being of the state and its regime, on the other. Notable among these laws are the following three: the 1950 Law of Return, the 1985 amendment to Basic Law: the Knesset, and the 1952 World Zionist Organization – Jewish Agency (Status) Law.<sup>155</sup>

The Law of Return grants automatic citizenship to Jews who immigrate to the country so that a Jewish majority is maintained. This law reflects the unfinished and ongoing character of Zionism, which is essential to maintaining the settler colonial character of the state. The Basic Law: the Knesset (amendment no. 9 section 7A which was passed on 31 July 1985) as well as reflecting the same characters of the Law of Return, institutionalises the definition of Israel as the state of the Jews. The law prevents the participation of candidates in Knesset elections if they deny the existence of Israel as the state of the Jewish people (Knesset 1985).<sup>156</sup>

The status of the extraterritorial and exclusively Jewish organisations; the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency, was officially recognised in a law that was enacted in 1952. According to the law, the two bodies, which represent world Jewry and as such are accountable solely to the Jewish people rather than the citizens of the state, were authorised to continue with their pre-state functions in areas of

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<sup>155</sup> More than 90 laws relate directly and indirectly to the Jewish character of the state (see Dahlih, M. (2005) 'The essence of collective rights and the conditions to materialise them', in Jamal, A. (ed.) *Contributions about Collective Rights and the Nation State*, Haifa: Mada al-Karmel, p.103 (quoted in Mustafa M. and Subhi M. (2005) *Without a Permit: the Policy of Arab House Demolition in Israel*. Umm al-Fahem: Centre for Contemporary Studies, p 16 [Arabic].

<sup>156</sup>For more details on the law and its amendments see:  
[http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic2\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic2_eng.htm) .

immigrants' absorption, land and settlement as well as the coordination among Israeli institutions, in charge of handling them.<sup>157</sup>

The ethnic-absolutism which governs the three laws, and which previously led to the tragic ethnic cleansing of Palestine, perpetuates anxieties around demography and the urgent need to Judaize the land and secure Jewish majority and presence over land. It generates racial discourses and policies that construct the Palestinians as the enemy, the ticking bomb and the terrorists who need to be contained.<sup>158</sup> In the past, this logic contributed to legitimising and normalising the placing of Palestinians under military rule and occupation and in spaces of exception where violations of their human rights mattered less.<sup>159</sup>

### **The land regime: the creation of a legal mechanism for dispossession and exclusion**

To assert Jewish control over the newly seized land, and to prevent Palestinians from reclaiming their lost land, Israel, within a relatively short period of time, between

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<sup>157</sup> For more details see: <http://jafi.org/JewishAgency/English/About/History>, and [http://www.knesset.gov.il/lexicon/eng/wzo\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/lexicon/eng/wzo_eng.htm)

<sup>158</sup> On 22 March 2002, Ephraim Eitam, the leader of the National Religious Party and member of government, told *Haaretz*, that “the Arabs in Israel are a ticking bomb...They resemble a cancerous growth. ...We shall have to consider the ability of the Israeli democracy to continue the Arabs’ participation” (quoted in Yiftachel 2006: 184). Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister of Finance and former Prime Minister echoing his concern about the Palestinian presence in Israel said in December of 2003: “If there is a demographic problem, and there is, it is with the Israeli Arabs who will remain Israeli citizens. If Israel’s Arabs become well integrated and reach 35-40 percent of the population, there will no longer be a Jewish state but a binational one ... The Declaration of Independence said Israel should be a Jewish and democratic state ...Therefore a policy is needed that will balance the two.” *Haaretz* 18 December 2003 (quoted *ibid*).

<sup>159</sup> The next chapter shows how the Palestinians in Israel were placed under a military regime from 1948-1966, despite being citizens of the state. For more literature on the current brutal occupation of the 1967 Palestinian territories and the inhumane treatment of Palestinians, even the legitimisation of their killing see: Mbembe, A. (2003) ‘Necropolitics’, *Public Culture* 15 (1), pp. 11-40, Gregory, D. (2004b) ‘Palestine and the War on Terror’, *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24:1, pp. 183-195.

1949 and the early 1960s, crafted a legal apparatus which would legalise and consolidate the dispossession of Palestinians and ensure the transfer of their land to Jewish and state control. At the conclusion of this legal marathon, about 93 per cent of Israel's land - within the pre-1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza - was owned, controlled and managed by the state or the JNF. In what follows, I discuss some of the major laws that legalised the dispossession of Palestinians and gave extensive powers to the authorities to continue expropriating land that was still under Palestinian ownership.<sup>160</sup>

### **The Defence and Emergency Regulations**

Upon its establishment, Israel inherited the Emergency Regulations that were introduced by the British Mandatory authorities in 1945. Although at the time of their introduction by the British these draconian measures were heavily criticised by the Zionists, the newly established state used them as the basis for its military rule which it imposed on its Palestinian citizens from 1948 until 1966.<sup>161</sup> Article 125 was the most relevant in terms of land dispossession. The article authorised the military commander, for security discretions, to declare land to be a "closed area." A person who wished to enter the area could only do so with a written authorisation from the military governor. Failing to obtain a permit would mean a criminal offence.

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<sup>160</sup> Up until the 1990s, Israel enacted about thirty laws, which transferred land from private Arab hands to state ownership (Yiftachel 1992: 86).

<sup>161</sup> Chapter 5 on the historical sociology of Umm al-Fahem discusses at length the military rule 1948-1966 and the role it played in land dispossession and fragmentation of Palestinian presence.



Another law, on which the military rule was based, was the Emergency Regulations, 5709-1949. This law provided the Minister of Defence the power to designate large tracts of land as a “security zone.” Once a land declared as such no one could live in it permanently, enter it or be in it without a permit. Although similar to article 125, this law gave the Minister of Defence and Israeli authorities further powers to expel the inhabitants of any Arab village that was within the confines of a security zone (Jiryis 1976: 90-91).<sup>162</sup> These regulations, which Schmitt would classify as the violation of law through law, rendered Palestinians trespassers on their own land, which consequently, led to their dispossession and even criminalisation of those who did not obey by the rules.

### **The Absentee Property Law (1950)**

The mass expropriation of Palestinian land was achieved during and shortly after the 1948 war. This was carried out either on the basis of temporary emergency regulations or without any formal legal justification (Kedar 2000-2001: 948). To legalise the seizure, Israel introduced the Absentee Property Law of 1950, which according to Jiryis (1976:85) was the cruellest of all the expropriation measures. The law was central in dispossessing Palestinians both retroactively and prospectively (Schechla 2001:21), as it allowed the state to confiscate properties from anyone classified as an absentee, therefore banning them from returning to their properties.

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<sup>162</sup> See Jiryis (1976: 90-94) on the case of the villages of Iqrith and Birim in the upper Galilee whose inhabitants were ordered to leave the villages initially for two weeks. Despite their initial winning at the High Court of Justice, the villagers were not allowed to return. The village of Khasas, also in upper Galilee, was served with an eviction notice and when the residents appealed to the High Court of Justice, the latter said the authorities that issued evacuation orders have an absolute authority and therefore the court cannot interfere in annulling such an order, despite ruling in favour of their return.

Article 1 (iii) of the law defines an absentee as anyone who “was a Palestinian citizen and left his ordinary place of residence in Palestine (a) for a place outside Palestine before the 27th Av, 5708 (1st of September, 1948); or (b) for a place in Palestine held at the time by forces that sought to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel or that fought against its establishment” (Knesset 1950: 68).<sup>163</sup> Moreover, an absentee could be an Israeli citizen who was present in Israel, but not at his property, at the time of the census, deeming his property absentees’ property (Kimmerling 2002: 1134). This is why the law is referred to as the “law of the present absentees” (Jiryis 1976: 85).

According to the law, the Custodian of Absentees’ Property, is the legal holder of all absentees’ property and has extensive power to decide not only what to classify as absentees’ property but also to expel occupants whom he thinks are illegally occupying a property. Paragraph 30 of the law stipulates: “(a) [w]here the Custodian has certified in writing that a person or body of persons is an absentee, that person or body of persons shall, so long as the contrary has not been proved, be regarded as an absentee. (b) Where the Custodian has certified in writing that some property is absentees’ property, that property shall, so long as the contrary has not been proved, be regarded as absentees’ property” (Knesset 1950: 80)

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<sup>163</sup> For more details see Absentees’ Property Law, 5710-1950, see: <https://www.knesset.gov.il/review/ReviewPage.aspx?kns=1&lng=3>.

### **The Land Acquisition Law (1953)**

Because much of the land that was expropriated through the above-mentioned laws was still officially the property of its original owners, the state needed to settle the question of land seizure and secure that ownership was transferred to its bodies. The Land Acquisition Law of 1953 for Public Purposes was designed to give answer to these concerns. The law, which is the epitome of its predecessors, as Jiryis (1976: 96) put it, empowers the Minister of Finance to transfer the seized land to state hands. Its aim was to retrospectively legalise all prior land expropriations, and “any seizure of property” including those “without justification” (Jiryis 1976: 97; Kimmerling 2002: 1135). The purpose of the law, as put by the Minister of Finance who proposed the bill to the Knesset, was:

[T]o legalize certain actions taken during the war and after it. ...When the government began to take over absentee property for security reasons or for necessary development projects, other expanses of land were seized for the same purpose, essentially in agricultural areas where the rights of ownership were not sufficiently clearly defined. There are reasons connected with national security and necessary projects that make it impossible to return these lands to their owners

(Quoted in Jiryis 1976: 96).

### **The Prescription Law (1958)**

By the end of the 1950s, the state had managed to expropriate the vast majority of the land. Its insatiable appetite for Judaizing and redeeming the land, however, was not fully satisfied. This time, through the use of technology in validating and establishing ownership, the state sought new avenues to continue the dispossession of Palestinians and to prevent them from seizing what it called state land.

The danger of Palestinians seizing land arose from the fact that large swaths of land, where a sizable Palestinian community was still living, had not been surveyed. According to Ottoman and British laws which were still in effect, in the event of a land survey, the farmers had the right to claim ownership over the land they were farming. To contain the danger, Israel enacted the Prescription Law, 5718-1958. The law stipulated that to establish ownership over land, farmers had to prove they had been cultivating the surveyed land for fifteen consecutive years before the enactment of the law (Jiryis 1976: 112-113).<sup>164</sup>

The Israeli authorities in seeking a concrete proof to determine whether the land in question was cultivated or not resorted to aerial photographs taken by the British Air Force in 1944 and early 1945. As a consequence, land that appeared neglected on the day the photograph was taken was automatically considered state land, even if “its owners may have turned it into first-class farmland in the intervening years” (ibid:115). The survey of land and the resulting settlement of title provided the state with an opportunity “for looting every conceivable plot of land remaining in Arab hands” (ibid: 116). 85 per cent of the settlement of title cases were decided in favour of the state. As a result, Palestinians lost hundreds of thousands of dunums to the state (Kedar 2000-2001: 952).

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<sup>164</sup> The period of cultivation had to be twenty years for those who started to cultivate the land after 1 March 1943. See Jiryis (1976:113) for more details.

## State land: Jewish land<sup>165</sup>

Some theorists in the Hebrew public think that since the state was created, it controls all land...and therefore the land problem was solved by itself... and the land was redeemed...The land is indeed state land, but there is one flaw with it. ...Rights to that land belong to all the state's citizens, including the Arabs. ...In this situation, we must ensure that most land will belong to Jews ... and therefore we must continue with land redemption.

Yosef Weitz, head of JNF, 1950(quoted in Yiftachel 2006: 137)

The ownership of Israel lands, being the lands in Israel of the State, the Development Authority or the Keren Kayemet Le-Israel, shall not be transferred either by sale or in any other manner.

Basic Law: Israel Lands (Knesset 1960)<sup>166</sup>

Now that the state had ensured that 93 per cent of land had successfully come under its control, the remaining task was to ensure that Palestinians were excluded from accessing it. Weitz as quoted above was right to indicate that Palestinians, as citizens of Israel, are *de jure* entitled to equal access to state land. To avoid this, and to entrench the pre-state Jewish alienability to land, legal avenues were again called upon to deliver. This time, however, the story was not as straightforward as in the case of land expropriation. The Basic Law: Israel Lands (1960) does not specify that all state land is Jewish land.

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<sup>165</sup> The title is inspired by my MSc thesis: 'State land – Jewish Land: Can Israel's Legal Framework of Land and Planning Policies be Characterized as Racist?' The thesis was written in 2006 as part of completing an MSc in Human Rights at the London School of Economics.

<sup>166</sup> Keren Kayemet Le-Israel is the JNF in Hebrew. For the rest of the law see: [http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic13\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic13_eng.htm)

To circumvent the law, Israel had to create an infrastructure of organisations and intricate decision-making mechanisms which ensured that the JNF and the Jewish Agency, two extra-territorial and exclusively Jewish agencies, were legally incorporated in land allocation policies. This allowed the state to simultaneously perpetuate the exclusion of Palestinians from having equal access to land, and ensure that land was exclusively Jewish. The intricate infrastructure helped absolve the state of accountability to the exclusionary and racialised policies of such organisations and mechanisms, thus contributing to maintaining the façade of being a democratic state. In what follows, I discuss the role of three important bodies: The Development Authority, Israel Lands Administration (ILA) and the JNF and the relationship between them.

### **The Development Authority**

To ensure the legality of the transfer of the absentees' properties to state and Jewish ownership a law was designed to establish a Development Authority. Article 19 of the Absentees Property Law (1950) states that "if a Development Authority is established under a law of the Knesset it shall be lawful for the custodian to sell the property to that Development Authority" (Jiryis 1981: 95). After four months of the enactment of the Absentees Law, the Knesset passed the Development Authority (Transfer of Property) Law of 1950. The law empowers the Development Authority to buy and exploit real estate in a manner that it saw fit for the development of public utilities in Israel. With the establishment of the Development Authority the Custodian of Absentees' Property started to transfer to it all the property that was at his disposal (Jiryis 1981:85). In 1953 all of the absentees' land was formally sold to the Authority (Hussain and McKay 2003: 149).

The Development Authority, however, was restricted by the following rules: First, any sale required the consent of the government. Second, sale of land could be effected only to (a) the state, (b) the JNF, (c) local authorities, if it was urban land and on a condition that the JNF was offered the land first, (d) a proposed “institution for settling landless Arabs” (Lehn and Davis 1988: 131).<sup>167</sup> Jiryis (1981: 86) contends that this particular means of transferring the ownership from one Israeli body to the other seemed to have been the suggestion of the JNF which wanted to acquire the land in legal manners, and which according to (Lehn and Davis 1988: 132) would guarantee Jewish ownership. As put by Lehn and Davis: “[t]he JNF argued...that it and not the state should become the holder of all of the abandoned lands, first, because the government had other demands...And second, because only the JNF could guarantee ownership by the Jewish people, since the state ‘in the current composition of population [including non-Jews] cannot be an adequate guarantor of Jewish ownership’” (1988: 131-132). By this, the JNF would have also secured a legal shield for both itself and the state. This arrangement would shelter it from lawsuits and would offer the state a protection against accusations of racism. The state could argue: “such discrimination was being done by an institution set up to settle Jews, not by the government itself” (Jiryis 1981: 86).

### **Israel Land Administration**

Israel Land Administration Law 1960 (ILA Law), established the ILA which is a government authority set up to administer the land owned by the state, the JNF and

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<sup>167</sup> An institution for settling landless Arabs, as stipulated by the law, was never established (Lehn and Davis 1988:131).

the Development Authority. On its website, ILA states that its land policy is based on four legal cornerstones. These include: Basic Law establishing the ILA (1960), Israel Lands Law (1960), Israel Land Administration (1960) and Covenant between the State of Israel and the World Zionist Organization (Jewish National Fund) (1960) (Israel Land Authority 2014).

The status of the JNF, an organ of the WZO, was determined by the 1952 World Zionist Organization – Jewish Agency (Status) Law. This law along with the 1960 covenant recognises that these pre-state bodies will continue to operate in Israel for the development of Israel, absorption of Jewish immigrants from the diaspora and settling them on Israel's lands, thus functioning as quasi-governmental bodies. Moreover, at the representation and decision-making level the JNF plays an important role. As stated on the Israel Land Authority website, the policy of the ILA is determined by the Israel Land Council. The Council is made up of 22 members, 12 of which represent government ministries and 10 represent the JNF (Israel Land Authority 2014).

To conclude, it is obvious that the dominance of the JNF as a landowner and in the decision making body is not negligible. Its pre-state Jews-only inscriptions decided in the sixth Zionist congress in 1903 and which stipulates the inalienable right of the Jews to land and that, the territory could be leased only to Jews, were retained, institutionalised and protected by law.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has discussed how Israel's colonial *nomos* is predicated on Manichaean and racialised foundations. As a Jewish state and a state of the Jews, Israel can never



be a state of all its citizens. Its very *nomos* is governed by exclusive-exclusionary ethnic absolutism that seeks at every opportunity to assert and consolidate the Jewish exclusive right to the state, thus structurally and institutionally excluding all those defined as non-Jews. As such, this very *nomos* and its ongoing settler-colonialism perpetuates the exclusion of the Palestinians who are seen as a problem in need of control and is therefore accountable for absencing the Palestinian city and the production of what the thesis calls suspended cities and suspended citizens.

To deconstruct Israel's *nomos*, the chapter was divided along two historical eras: before and after the establishment of the state in 1948. Before 1948 the chapter sought to unpack Zionism, which constitutes the ideological foundation of the state. It started by situating Zionism as a colonial ideology emerging in Western Europe at the peak of European colonialism of the late nineteenth century and at a time characterised by intensified anti-Semitism against European Jewry. It discussed how, in seeking to give a neat answer to the Jewish question and the Jews' right to self-determination in Palestine, Zionism mobilised religion, diplomacy and discourse as the bases for legitimising its territorial claim.

Diplomatically, the Zionist movement sought to mobilise Britain to its aid by concretely offering to be a geopolitical safeguard to British imperialist interests in the Middle East. Discursively, it presented itself as a modern European movement and constructed Palestine as *terra nullius* in need of redemption. It also manufactured a reservoir of cultural and spatial imaginaries that produced the indigenous Palestinians as unworthy of Palestine and the Zionists as the ones who knew best how to take care of the land and make it blossom and flourish.

The chapter then went to describe how the Zionist movement moved to concretely realise its colonial transformative project. Tel Aviv, the first colonial city to be built in Palestine, was discussed as an example for the ethnic absolutism and Manichaeism that govern Zionism. Moreover, understanding Tel Aviv's role in consolidating Zionism, both symbolically and concretely, as well as its political and economic role in nation building, is important when put in the context of the thesis's concern with the Palestinian city and the urban question under (post)colonialism.

Building on Carl Schmitt's insightful analysis of the indispensable role naming plays in establishing proprietorship over land, the chapter discussed the production of the Hebrew map and its performative political properties. The Hebrew map not only sought to create a new narrative, but also to erase and deny the existence of the rival Palestine narrative and reality. Moreover, together with the village dossiers project that worked towards producing a comprehensive documentation of Palestinian villages, the Hebrew map played an important role in domesticating the terrain for military and political objectives. Domesticating the land proved crucial for carrying out the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.

The chapter then moved on to discuss the second historical era, from 1948 up until the early 1960s. This was the defining era that has institutionalised and legalised Israel's *nomos*. The chapter discussed how Israel, soon after its establishment, worked to legitimate and consolidate its exclusive-exclusionary Manichaean *nomos* through legal avenues and manipulations. This was discussed particularly in relation to demography and land. In the process the chapter also exposed how law making was manipulated to serve political objectives and to cover up a system that is foundationally and institutionally racist. The pivotal role of the extraterritorial quasi-

governmental exclusively Jewish organisation, the JNF and the Jewish agency, was discussed in this context.

The next chapter, through deconstructing the workings of (post)colonial governmentality in Umm al-Fahem and the way the state sought to render Fahamwis governable from the time the village came under Israeli control until it was declared a city in 1985, indirectly engages with Israel's *nomos* and how it has shaped Umm al-Fahem's history.

**Part II**  
**Deconstructing for constructing:**  
**The case of Umm al-Fahem**

## **Chapter 5**

### **Historical sociology of Umm al-Fahem: control, repression and defiance**

Through employing historical analysis this chapter sheds light onto almost 40 years of historical sociology of Umm al-Fahem between 1949 when it was handed over to Israel, to the mid 1980s when it was declared a city. Three main and interconnected themes run through this chapter: governmentality, Fahmawis' response to it, and the very materiality of the village/city. The chapter deconstructs the workings of (post)colonial governmentality in the way the state sought to render Fahmawis and their village governable on one hand, and Fahmawis' resilience, defiance, agency and determination to achieve a substantive citizenship, and to build a village/city buzzing with culture, creativity and solidarity, on the other.

It puts forward the argument that the underlying objectives of the different technologies that constitute governmentality, whether direct military rule, co-option, material incentives, divide and rule, criminalisation of resisting political activists, (in)direct intervention into local politics, state withdrawal from the provision of services and negligence of urban infrastructure, or perpetuating a state of suspension, is to control Umm al-Fahem and render Fahmawis docile, domesticated and in a state of suspension. The chapter's overall objective is to discuss some of the historical factors that shape the making of the city, to help unravel the nature of citizenship and the city, and how the latter responds under (post)colonial conditions.

Starting with Umm al-Fahem's very recent history in relation to a political proposal made by a senior Israeli government official to annex the city to the Palestinian Authority, the chapter brings to the fore the subject of living in suspension and precariousness. It then moves back to 1949 onwards, to chronologically deconstruct the village/city historical sociology that is roughly divided into three periods: 1949-1966, 1960s - mid 1970s, mid 1970s – mid 1980s. The years 1949 - 1966 describe an important part of the history of the city. These were the years of an oppressive and at times repressive direct colonial military government imposed on Umm al-Fahem. Throughout this era, the chapter discusses Umm al-Fahem's socio-economic and political conditions and how the military government spatially confined Palestinians to their villages and brought almost every aspect of their everyday life under scrutiny, surveillance and control. It also discusses the different technologies the government used to socially, politically and spatially fragment them. Fahmawis' defiance and struggle for rights, amidst the harsh repressive conditions, are an integral part of this history.

The chapter then moves to discuss the second historical period from the early 1960s to roughly the mid 1970s. This period is characterised by the struggle to achieve an independent democratic local government, free of direct political interference as manifested in undemocratically appointed leaders. It then moves to discuss the third period, the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s when Umm al-Fahem was governed by a democratically elected local government. Throughout this period the chapter examines three main subjects. These are the socio-economics of the village, the agency of Fahmawis as illustrated by the voluntary work brigades organised by leading political forces to tackle the issue of poor urban infrastructure and the struggle

to earn the official recognition of a city. It also discusses a locally-led cultural project whose aim was to address the severe shortages in the provision of facilities for cultural activities. The chapter ends with declaring Umm al-Fahem a city in 1985.

This historical and sociological analysis draws mostly on primary and archival material gathered through the ethnographic work in the city. It includes Arabic newspapers and magazines and other newspapers in Hebrew and English collected from two Israeli universities' archives: Haifa and Jerusalem. Local biographies, interviews as well as secondary literature all contribute to deconstructing the history of Umm al-Fahem throughout that period.

### **Umm al-Fahem: a frontier city, “in” yesterday, “out” today**

“To be able to control Wadi Ara, we have to seize Umm al-Fahem.”

Ben-Gurion, 31 October 1948 (quoted in Jameel 2007:34 1998: 63)

‘Disengage from Umm al-Fahem,’ read huge billboards on key locations and artery roads in Israel, including the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem and Wadi Ara roads. This was Avigdor Lieberman’s response to Israel’s disengagement from the occupied Gaza strip in 2005.<sup>168</sup> This, however, was not an isolated response. Rather, it constitutes part of his political proposal of land and population swaps in heavily populated Palestinian areas inside Israel with settlements in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian

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<sup>168</sup> Lieberman was a fierce opponent of Ariel Sharon’s plan to disengage from Gaza. To pursue his plan, Sharon, then Prime Minister, dismissed Lieberman who was the Minister of Transportation. For more detail see: (Myre 2004) of the *New York Times* from 4 June 2004.

Territories. Shifting boundaries where communities could remain intact is the suggested mechanism for materialising the proposal.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September 2010, Lieberman, then Israel's Foreign Minister, said: "A final agreement between Israel and the Palestinians has to be based on a program of exchange of territory and populations... We are not talking about population transfer but about defining borders so as best to reflect the demographic reality" (Ravid 2010).<sup>169</sup> "The best solution is separation between the nations and the creation of homogenous states..." he told the *New York Times* on 6 November 2006 (Myer 2006).

At the heart of Lieberman's proposal for racial purity stands the ethnic absolutist logic that governs Zionist Manichaeism, where space is mobilised again to serve political ends. Shifting boundaries offers a spatial solution for a very biopolitical problem to use Foucault's terminology and illustrates best what Eyal Weizman (2007: 6) has dubbed as "elastic geography" in relation to the "ebbing and flowing" border between the Occupied Territories and Israel. Moreover, it encapsulates the state of suspension and precariousness imposed on Palestinians, and Fahmawis in this case, and questions both the very essence of their citizenship and their right to the city.

The residents of Umm al-Fahem are categorically opposed to the plan. For Hashim Abdel Rahman, the then Mayor of Umm al-Fahem, the plan was "racist and

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<sup>169</sup> For more details see Ravid, B. (2010) 'Lieberman presents plans for population exchange at UN', *Haaretz*, 28 September 2010, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/lieberman-presents-plans-for-population-exchange-at-un-1.316197> .



unacceptable” (Benn 2005).<sup>170</sup> “Umm-el-Fahem is not a commodity, neither is it a precarious patch, but rather an integral part of the homeland’s climate, heritage, history, existence, identity and destiny,” wrote a local resident in a newspaper article (Mahameed 2006). In 2008, when the plan was being debated as part of the final status talks between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, the city had simultaneously convened a symposium, to which they invited progressive Jewish activists and local active academics to discuss what they called “the danger of the population swap” (Ighbariyih 2008). Legal experts from the city concluded that transferring a population against its will is a war crime under international law (ibid).

Only six decades earlier, however, the political and spatial map was diametrically opposed. Umm al-Fahem, as a frontier mountainous village located on the border between the West Bank and Israel and overlooking the strategic road of Wadi Ara which became under Israeli control, was a desired geopolitical territory that the newly established state desperately needed for strategic reasons. On 14 May 1948, Israel’s first Independence Day, Umm el- Fahem was not yet part of the newly declared state. Umm al-Fahem managed to defeat the Zionist armed forces with fierce resistance, despite the latter military supremacy. “To be able to control Wadi Ara, we have to seize Umm al-Fahem,” wrote David Ben-Gurion in his memoir on 31 October 1948 (quoted in Jameel 2007: 34, 1998: 63).

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<sup>170</sup> For further details see interview of the mayor by *Haaretz* correspondent Aluf Benn (2005) in an article that appeared in the *Washington Post* on 14 August 2005 under the title ‘Trading Places: Can a Land Swap Keep Jews From Being a Minority in Their Own State?’, available at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/08/13/AR2005081300091\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/08/13/AR2005081300091_pf.html) .

“Land with Arabs on it and land without Arabs on it are two very different types of land,” Ben-Gurion told his party’s central committee on 16 March 1949 (Segev 1998: 28), just two weeks before the demarcation of the borders between the West Bank and Israel. Certain of their aim to annex the geopolitically strategic village of Umm al-Fahem and Wadi Ara, but unwilling to include its Palestinian population, the Zionists tried five times to occupy the area but were defeated. In an attempt to inject some hope and invoke victorious feelings among the Zionist soldiers, the last operation to occupy the village was called “Restoring our Glorious Past.” The people of Umm al-Fahem yet again resisted and managed to inflict defeat on the army (Pappé 2006: 195).

However, what the Zionists failed to achieve through military occupation, they achieved through striking a deal with the Jordanians, who were in charge of the West Bank at the time, including Umm al-Fahem. On 3 April 1949, Umm al-Fahem, and 15 other frontier villages in what is known as the Little Triangle were all annexed to Israel, within the Rhodes agreements signed between Israel and Jordan.<sup>171</sup> The agreement shifted those villages to the west of what became known as the Green Line. The Little Triangle was ceded to Israel in May of that year (Jameel 2007).

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<sup>171</sup> Despite being rectangular in shape, the area is called the Triangle because it was part of the Jenin-Nablus-Tulkarm Triangle, which was not within the boundaries of newly established state of Israel on 14 May 1948 (Jiryis 1976: 5)

## Colonial military government: between policing the transition and the fight back<sup>172</sup>

We call upon... the sons of the Arab people, the inhabitants of the state of Israel, to keep the peace and take part in the building of the state on the basis of full and equal citizenship...

Ben-Gurion 14 May 1948, Declaration of Independence<sup>173</sup>

Soon after the Rhodes agreements, Fahmawis were called upon to gather in Al-Meedan.<sup>174</sup> “It has been decided to hand Umm al-Fahem and the Triangle over to Israel,” Fahmawis were told by the Jordanian General Abdulla Al-Tal.<sup>175</sup> For Fahmawis the decision came as a shock. It was met with resentment, especially by those engaged in armed resistance against the Zionists. “For God sake, how could you do this? What will be our fate, especially those armed among us?” responded Ali Al-Faris, a prominent resistance fighter who thereafter left the country for Syria (Jameel 1998: 72). On 20 May 1949, the Israeli Army forces entered Umm al-Fahem with armed vehicles. Upon their arrival they met with the village traditional leaders - *makhateer*.<sup>176</sup> After the meeting was finished Fahmawis were called upon to gather in Al-Meedan. All those who had guns were ordered to hand them over to the Israeli

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<sup>172</sup> This chapter situates the history of Umm al-Fahem as part of the history of the Palestinians in Israel. Therefore, in the historical background about the military government it refers not only to the Fahmawis but Palestinians in general as well.

<sup>173</sup> To view the rest of the declaration see (Knesset 2014). Available at: <http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/heb/megilat.htm> [Hebrew].

<sup>174</sup> Al-Meedan means the square in Arabic. It used to be the main gathering area in the village. It is located at the junction of the four neighbourhoods that make up the old part of the village. Chapter 7 includes a section on Al-Meedan as an urban space that is quintessential of the political, cultural and spatial transformations which the city has undergone.

<sup>175</sup> During the 1948 war, Umm al-Fahem was under the Arab Army, first the Iraqi regiment which had its base there and later under the Jordanians.

<sup>176</sup> At the time, the village had four different *makhateer*-chiefs, representing its four big families and their respective neighbourhood.

authorities present at the scene (see figure 11). The army message to Umm al-Fahem was:

To the people of Umm-el-Fahem, the war is over, the fight has ceased. It is time for peace and security, we are now one country, we are two fraternal peoples in one country, we will live together and build an honoured future together. Hand over your arms and no harm will be inflicted on you.

(quoted in Ighbariyih 1988: 79; Jameel 2007: 51)



Figure 11: A Fahmawi handing his gun over to the army, courtesy of IDF archive

From that day on, Umm al-Fahem was placed under a direct military government and was to be ruled by a military governor. Meanwhile, not only were the locals traumatised by the events and the feelings of betrayal at the hands of the Arab army,

they were forced to celebrate and stage their content for the arrival of the Israeli forces (see figure 12). They had to clap to the state Zionist anthem of hatikvah that has no mention whatsoever of their existence. Under the headline ‘The Israeli flag is waving over Umm al-Fahem,’ the Israeli newspaper of *Il-Yom* reported: “On Friday 20 May 1949, the first phase of handing over Wadi Ara, in the Triangle, to the Israeli forces had been accomplished ... at about two thirty in the afternoon, the Israeli flag was raised over the house which the military governor had taken over to be his headquarters in the village of Umm al-Fahem. The flag was raised after completing a military parade in the village’s square that ended by hatikvah anthem and crowds’ chanting and clapping,” (*Il Yom*, 22 May 1949, quoted in Jameel 2007: 54-55).



Figure 12: Fahmawis celebrating the arrival of military forces, courtesy of IDF archives

Faithful to colonial rule strategies of fostering traditional leadership, the first step that both the regional and Umm al-Fahem’s military governors took after the parade

finished was to convene a meeting with the village *makhateer* and notables. The introductory meeting set the rules of conduct between Fahmawis and the military government. Locals were asked to calm down and collaborate with the new regime to achieve peace and order. They were ordered to hand over all their arms as well. The permit regime was partially introduced and warnings against hiding or assisting refugees were made.<sup>177</sup> They were also told that foreigners, i.e. refugees would not be recognised and that those failing to follow instructions would be punished. *Il-Yom* newspaper also reported that the military government would safeguard residents' rights and that "anyone who does not feel he can fulfil his duties can leave to territories which are on other side of the Israeli borders" (quoted *ibid*).<sup>178</sup>

The promise of peace and security soon proved to be empty rhetoric. The military regime imposed on Umm al-Fahem and the entire Palestinian community inside Israel was repressive and controlling. It entrusted military governors to rule with almost absolute power and impunity.<sup>179</sup> It confined Palestinians to their villages and towns and subjected them to a regime of permits. Under this regime they had to ask the military governor's permission to leave their village. Permits had to be in writing. Failing to obtain a permit put Fahmawis under a constant threat of criminalisation for

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<sup>177</sup> The point about the refugees was particularly important as Umm al-Fahem before becoming part of Israel was a sanctuary for Palestinian refugees who were fleeing and forced to flee their villages in 1948. About one-fifth of the village's population were landless refugees.

<sup>178</sup> The Arabic newspaper *Al-Difaa*, of 23 May 1949, reported the same but with different rhetoric: "The Jewish military governor had met with the *makhateer* of occupied Umm al-Fahem and had asked them to set up a committee made of the extended families dignitaries representatives, who would be the link between the authorities and the people. The committee which included eight representatives in addition to the four *makhateer* met on the same day with the military governor, who handed them a list of some of those who did not hand their guns over. The *makhateer* and the committee had ensured him that all the guns had been handed over. The governor, then, asked them to sign a paper which held them responsible in case any guns were found...." (cited in Jameel 2007: 54).

<sup>179</sup> The police was in charge of all matters relating to Palestinians living in cities, while military governors were in charge of Palestinians elsewhere (Jiryis 1976: 16).

daily practices as normal and banal as visiting a family member or a doctor outside of their village or even possessing non-rationed food or clothes.

The military government, formally and legally established in January 1950, was based on the 1945 Defence (emergency) regulations inherited from the British rule (Jiryis 1976: 16). The regulations were worded in great detail and gave extensive power to the authorities to interfere in almost every aspect of Palestinian life, “from control over the freedom of speech, movement, and the press to the regulation of the possession of arms, the expropriation of property and the control of the means of transportation” (ibid). They also “gave the military governors the power to appoint military commanders, while the judicial powers were entrusted to military courts appointed by the army chief of staff” (ibid).<sup>180</sup> The Israeli government’s Central Committee for Security, the highest body dealing with Arabs, directed the military government’s *modus operandi*. Members of the committee included the commander of the military government, the commander of the secret intelligence Arab unit, the police, and the Prime Minister’s Advisor on Arab Affairs (Boymel 2002: 135).

Of the 162 Mandatory Regulations, Ozacky-Lazar (2002: 105) argues five were fully enforced. These were as follows: Article 109 which allowed the military government to ban anyone from being present in certain areas. Article 110 which stated individuals were subject to police supervision with banishment entitlement. Article

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<sup>180</sup> Ozacky-Lazar (2002:105) notes that the military government was imposed mainly in Arab populated areas: the Galilee, the Triangle, the Naqab and the cities of Ramlih, Lydd, Jaffa and Ashkilon. In the Triangle it covered the armistice ceasefire line with Jordan, with the length of 55-60 km from Majjido in the North, down to Wadi Ara under Kufur Qasim. The area included 30 Arab localities which spanned over 320,000 dunum.



111 which allowed administrative detention for anyone thought to be a threat to public security. Article 124 imposing curfew and Article 125, which for Jiryis (1976: 17) was the most notorious of all. Article 125 granted the military governor the power to proclaim any area or place a forbidden [closed] area where no one is allowed to enter or leave without a written permit issued by him or his deputy. Failing to follow the order was a punishable crime.<sup>181</sup> In addition, Jiryis quotes Article 108 as particularly important. It entitled the military governor the power to decide whether to enforce the above-mentioned restrictions “at any time he considered it necessary for securing the public safety, the defence of Israel, the maintenance of public order, or the suppression of mutiny, rebellion or riot” (ibid: 19-20).

Under this regime the Palestinians had very limited, if any, recourse to hold the military authorities to account judicially. Moreover, unlike their fellow Jewish citizens, Palestinians were not tried in civil courts but in military ones set up to ensure compliance with articles of the emergency regulations (Jiryis 1976:19). The judges in those courts were from the military and as such not necessarily equipped with juridical knowledge (Ozacky-Lazar 2002: 105). The authorities were “omnipotent” in areas they controlled (Jiryis 1976: 20; Ozacky-Lazar ibid), with absolute freedom to act exactly as they chose, unhampered by administrative restraints. Judicial control was restricted to the possibility of appealing to the Supreme Court of Justice to challenge the legality of the military government’s actions. However, time proved that “the Supreme Court made it a rule not to interfere with the military government when

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<sup>181</sup> See Chapter on Israel’s colonial *nomos* where Article 125 is discussed as another mechanism for land expropriation.



its actions were based on ‘security reasons’ (Jiryis 1976: 20) and that “the military governor was not to be brought to court... as this might affect national security” (Ozacky-Lazar 2002: 105).<sup>182</sup>

### **Objectives and rationale**<sup>183</sup>

For Ben-Gurion “the military government came into existence to protect the right of Jewish settlement in all parts of the state” (Knesset Debates, 20 Feb. 1963, p 1217, quoted in Jiryis 1976: 53). Academic texts agree that its objectives included the exclusion of the Palestinians from enjoying full citizenship, allowing the state further land expropriation, consolidating Jewish control, and preventing Palestinian refugees from returning. For example, for Kimmerling and Migdal (2003: 177) the real objective behind restricting the Palestinians in what they called a “territorial enclave” was to exclude them from “the broader labour market so they could not compete with the Jewish immigrants who were flooding into the state and preventing them from resisting appropriation of their lands.” For Ozacky-Lazar (2002: 107) the main rationale was to maintain the new status quo so that the Arabs who left would not return.

Ridding the country of its Palestinian population was another objective. Boymel (2002), who looked into official documents, including those of the ruling party of Mapai, documents from the Prime Minister’s Office, the police, the Shabak - secret

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<sup>182</sup> Jiryis (1976:22) argues that the Supreme Court did not challenge the military government and had in fact allowed ample space for the authorities to act under the pretext of security reasons, and “at times doing its best to legally justify the government actions.”

<sup>183</sup> Objectives and rationale as revealed in some academic texts on the military government.

intelligence services - and documents from the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab Affairs, revealed that the military government was necessary for the state as long as the Palestinians existence was hoped to be temporary (2002: 156). For Boymel, this regime was also the main mechanism that ensured the exclusion of Palestinians from state apparatuses, and allowed for what he calls the Judaization of the state (ibid: 134).

For Jiryis (1976: 16) the military government with its draconian regulations was “a typical example of the traditional imperialist attitude in dealing with the native population of a colony.” It constituted a state within a state that had its own judicial, legislative and executive powers. In a colonial setting repressive policies and criminalisation are the norm, not the exception. The double standards and the binary systems are part of what Fanon (1969) in *the Wretched of the Earth* called the Manichaeian world cut into compartments and propped up by the power of the gun.

### **Everyday coloniality, everyday Manichaeism**

Space under the military government with its regime of permits became highly racialised and ghettoised. In mixed cities, Palestinians were confined to their neighbourhoods, to which they referred as ghettos. Fouzi el-Asmar, a Palestinian poet, journalist and academic whose work and life provide a prism into the everyday life of Palestinians, recalls the pain of being confined to the ghetto in the mixed city of il-Lydd. His experience bears witness to the Manichaeian nature and double standards of the colonial state in the early years of its establishment.

[N]ot long after the removal of all the furniture from the houses in Lydda, Jewish families began to be housed there. They would choose a house they liked and move into it. The Arabs were not

allowed to leave their own ghetto without a permit from the authorities, and the most infuriating thing for us was that our area and other areas in Lydda which were inhabited by Arabs were under military command, while the rest of the city in which Jews lived, was not. Until the early 1950s we could not go out without a special permit, while the Jews, of course, were free to go anywhere except for into our ghetto.

Fouzi El-Asmar (1975: 23)

Fahmawis, like other Palestinians, became spatially isolated, and confined to lines and areas designated for them by the military authorities. Access to their land was denied and much of their fertile land was either declared absentee property or became under Jordanian rule after the borders were shifted as part of the Rhodes agreements. This was particularly difficult as the majority of Fahmawis relied on agriculture as their prime source of living. Those who defied the military orders by smuggling into their land to harvest it were criminalised. On 31 March 1950 *Al-Ithad* newspaper, then the only non-state Arabic newspaper covering the conditions under which Palestinians lived, reporting on the criminalisation and imprisonment of Fahmawis who crossed the lines, wrote:

Locals are demanding access to their land and to live in dignity in their villages. More than 30 farmers who were farming their land between il-Lajjoun - in the Jezreel Valley -, and Zalafa - next to Umm al-Fahem - were brought to court and have been sentenced between one to two months imprisonment for stepping beyond the demarcated line for them, and because the land was declared now absentee property...the military government is pushing people to leave...transfer. (Quoted in Ighbariyih 1988: 85).

As expected, rocketing unemployment, hardship and poverty became part of Fahmawis' everyday reality. For them, the first years of the military rule were referred to as "the years of siege and starvation" (Jameel 2007:64). On 28 August

1949, *Al-Itihad*, in an article entitled ‘The Conditions in Umm al-Fahem: Illness, Poverty, Unemployment and Military Rule,’ reported:

The things people complain about the most are: unemployment and the military rule that restricts their liberties and movement and therefore hamper their living. In Umm al-Fahem there are about 1200 workers who used to work in Haifa, Jaffa and other places, most of whom, if not all, are unemployed. They are struggling to make their living after they have spent all their life savings during this last year.

(*Al-Itihad* 1949)

*Al-Itihad* of 29 October 1950 featured another article written by a Fahmawi where he described the abject poverty and the repressive measures under which Fahmawis found themselves. The article entitled ‘Umm-el-Fahem is in Severe Crisis’ wrote:

In our village, trade unions are banned by the military government. Under the pretext of security, leaving the village in search of work is banned, and getting to our land is banned. The only thing permitted in the village is either dying of hunger or moving to the other side. Those who complain about the conditions are banished on the pretext of posing a security threat and for being dangerous communists... I would also like to inform you that this letter which you are publishing in *Al-Itihad* will not be read by village residents as the military governor has banned *Al-Itihad* from getting into the village ... it is expected that the harsh economic conditions are leading to an increasing number of people leaving to the Palestinian side occupied by Abdullah [of Jordan]...however there is no room for despair.

(*Al-Itihad* 1950)

### **The bread demonstration: repression and resistance**

Against the harsh conditions of oppression, deprivation, isolation and starvation Fahmawis started to get organised to resist the iron fist of the military government. Led by the communists Ahmad Khadir, Ibraheem Husari and Muhammed Shraydi they took to the streets of their village and organised rallies outside the military

governor's house demanding that life essentials such as work and bread were provided as well as an end to the military rule.<sup>184</sup> On 2 August 1950, 500 unemployed workers and 300 school children and women took part in the first bread demonstration to be organised under the military government. The demonstrators chanted, "we want bread, we want flour, Hey you Minaheem we are hungry" (Jameel 2007; Ighbariyih 1988: 86).<sup>185</sup>

The demonstration was successful in achieving some demands. The gains were in the form of 60 work permits, and an increase of flour, sugar and rice rations (Ighbariyih 1988: 87). The military government, however, had ways to revenge the few concessions it had made. Soon after the demonstration, it criminalised the leading demonstrators, detaining some for 48 hours and others for months. It also imposed taxation on education, penalising those who would not pay by denying them permits (ibid).

Punitive measures and the persecution of activists, especially the communists, were common practice. Military government regulations gave the military governor the power to banish or administratively detain Palestinians, forcing them to report their movements to the police (Jiryis 1976: 18). However, from the point of view of the political activists, the harsh restrictions did not deter them from continuing to fight for their rights and against the military government.

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<sup>184</sup> These first communists in the village used to work in the port city of Haifa before 1948. It was there that they became exposed to the communist party and its literature.

<sup>185</sup> Minaheem was the military governor of Umm al-Fahem.

Local biographies of two prominent communists in the village, Muhammed Shraydih (1988) and Ibraheem Husari (2005), provide further insights into the everyday oppression, harassment, and criminalisation alongside defiance and resilience. Although their activism repertoire included mainly democratic activities such as collecting signatures, organising rallies, and distributing newspapers that under a democratic regime would not be penalised, their biographies reveal they were subject to persecution, mostly in the shape of arrest and banishment away from their families. After the bread demonstration, Muhammed Shraydih, Ibraheem Husari and Ahmad Khadir were all banished to the neighbouring village of Bartaa'ah on the borders of the West Bank.<sup>186</sup> Shraydih, active both locally and nationally, was only allowed to reunite with his family after six months (Ighbariyih 1988: 89-91).

In 1951, Shraydih was again arrested for 5 months, this time for collecting signatures to petition the Knesset against the murder of a local child at the hands of the military (ibid: 101). In May 1956, he was sentenced to twelve-month imprisonment for insulting the military governor and causing disturbance in his office (Jiryis 1976: 29). By 1960, Shraydih would have spent five and a half years in prison. For him, those years that deprived him of his liberty did not manage to demoralise him. "Today I'm leaving prison more determined to achieve the goals of my communist party, the goals of freedom and democracy, peoples' fraternity, peace and dignified life," said Shraydih in an interview to *Al-Itihad* on 20 March 1960 (Ighbariyih 1988: 136). The

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<sup>186</sup> Within the Rhodes Agreements, Bartaa'ah was split into two: the West Bank or Arab side as it became to be known and the Israeli one.

struggle to live “in dignity, for keeping the land, for true and just Jewish-Arab fraternity,” remained paramount to him (Shraydih quoted *ibid*: 134-35).

Another area of work that the political activists identified as crucial was campaigning to convince people to stay where they were. The harsh conditions led some Palestinians to leave to the Jordanian side of the border, an act that was welcomed, even openly prompted by the military government. For example, in June 1951, *Al-Itihad* reported that the military government had asked the *makhateer* and other notables to sign an agreement to transfer poor workers to the Jordanian side. This was met with resistance. Political activists demanded work for the unemployed instead of transfer.<sup>187</sup>

### **The first of May 1958**

The events of the First of May 1958 marked the peak of the political activists’ defiance of the military government’s orders. It was particularly special and had been etched into the collective memory of Umm al-Fahem. Traditionally, for the communists of Umm al-Fahem, the first of May had been an occasion to be celebrated. However, May 1958 was also an occasion for mass celebrations in Israel. Marking a decade since its establishment, it played an important role in the state’s propaganda machine. The entire country, including the Palestinian localities, had to

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<sup>187</sup> See ‘Freedom to Elect, Enough with Terror and Provocation’, *Al-Itihad*, 23 June 1951. The following appeared in the article: “...the military governor had convened the *makhateer* and notables who were asked to sign a paper written in Hebrew agreeing that poor workers be transferred across the border...they did sign...thereafter, the governor started calling up those workers who under terror and torture were made to sign asking they be transferred to the other side. A movement was formed to protest against the governor, “demanding he stop his repressive approach and instead find work for the unemployed.”



celebrate its achievements as a modern state. Umm al-Fahem was no exception. The military governor, using his collaborators, and the power of intimidation had staged celebrations in the village (see figure 13).



Figure 13: Umm al-Fahem 1958: girls' choir celebrating the 10th anniversary of the state.  
Government Press Office (courtesy of Umm al-Fahem Art Gallery)

The communists, however, had a different plan. A few days after the first of May, defying the military governor's orders, Fahmawis managed to smuggle Tawfeeq Toubi, then a communist member of Knesset, on a donkey through the mountains to take part in their celebrations. When Toubi finally got to the village, hundreds of people were waiting for him in a mosque square which some had thereafter called the 'First of May' square. The celebrations started at 11:30 in the morning. As expected,



the police aggressively tried to repress the celebrations.<sup>188</sup> But Fahmawis did not give in. They fought the police. As field interviewees recalled, they even managed to beat up the military governor who sought refuge under a lorry, begging them to let him out safely.

Detention of active communist members and dawn raids followed the event. A few days later, the military government summoned a meeting with its collaborators and the *makhateer* to condemn the communists. It also invited the press to report the meeting.<sup>189</sup> However, the battle of the First of May 1958, as referred to by Fahmawis, constituted an important landmark in the collective memory of the village and communist activism, not only locally but also nationally and for generations to come.<sup>190</sup>

It is no surprise that undermining the communists' activities was one of the political objectives behind the military government. Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary on 20 December 1948: "Margovski was appointed as the representative of the military government in the Galilee...I gave him two instructions: to prevent the Arabs infiltrating the Galilee and to prevent the communists from taking over among the Arabs." This mission, as Umm al-Fahem testifies, had failed. The Communist Party took deeper roots among the Palestinians. As Ozacky-Lazar (2002: 107) puts it "the

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<sup>188</sup> For further details see 'The Police Fire on a Meeting in Umm al-Fahem. The People Defending Themselves against the Aggressive Assault', *Al-Itihad* 9 May 1958, [Arabic].

<sup>189</sup> See article: 'Police Launches a Terror Campaign in Umm al-Fahem, and Calls for a Meeting with his Collaborators to Stage a Support for the National Oppressive Authorities', *Al-Itihad*, 13 May 1958 [Arabic].

<sup>190</sup> See *Al-Itihad* article written 50 years after 1958 May events: Ighbaryih, J. (2008) 'Umm al-Fahem: Prisoners' Testimonies from the First of May 1958', 2 May 2008, in: <http://www.aljabha.org/index.asp?i=34002> [Arabic].

Communist Party was never outlawed and gained lots of support among the Arabs in the early years of the state.”<sup>191</sup>

### **The Good Arabs, the stooges and the fight for a local government**

“It was through the *makhateer*, the sheikhs and the heads of the hamulah [extended family] that the military government could control an entire community with a small number of people,” concluded a report of the Prime Minister Advisor on Arab Affairs on ten years of military rule/objectives and achievements (recommendations for dealing with the Arab minority in Israel’ September 1959, State of Israel Archive, 2-926-1959-18, p 12, quoted in Boymel 2002: 135). Following its predecessor’s British footsteps and other colonial regimes, from its inception the military government believed that key to its rule over the Palestinians would be nurturing the traditional, tribal-based leadership, on one hand and the creation of a loyal section of society that would be politically tied to the Ben-Gurion ruling party of Mapai, on the other. The establishment, mainstream Israelis, policy-makers and academics referred to this section as the good Arabs. The goal behind such an alliance and encouragement of tribal-based politics headed by the *makhateer* was that Mapai and other Zionist parties could “affect the whole Palestinian question by preventing the formation of any Arab organisation not favorable to Israel” (Jiryis 1976: 49). The *makhateer* also served as informers to the authorities, providing the latter with weekly reports on their respective villages.

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<sup>191</sup> See chapter 7 on the 1976 Koenig report in relation to the communist party and recommendations to neutralise their increasing popularity.

This form of indirect rule over the natives through the encouragement of social hierarchies is not unique to Israel. Paul Rabinow (1995) discussing Morocco under French colonial rule describes similar processes. There, the French colonial officers, especially Lyautey, sought to govern the country through first identifying and then strengthening existing traditional social forms and practices. Lyautey said:

Vex not tradition, leave custom be. Never forget that in every society there is a class to be governed, and a natural-born ruling class upon whom all depends. Link their interests to ours...

Quoted in Rabinow (1995: 285)

Taking advantage of the dire socio-economic and political conditions of Palestinians who had suffered from a political defeat that ruptured their society and were now stripped of the most basic of rights, imprisoned in a regime of permits, the military government this time through employing divide and rule technologies tried to govern its Palestinian population. The technologies were diversified and included co-option, economic favouritism and bribery for those willing to collaborate (Jiryis 1976: 50). Cohen (2010: 27) noted that providing leases for relatively large tracts of public land or absentee property rendered collaboration with the authorities worthwhile. This was also profitable as refugees and landless Palestinians could provide cheap labour to work the leased lands. This section was also allowed to engage in what the authorities considered “legal smuggling business” for goods such as meat (ibid).

The carrot and stick policy of promising pass permits and nepotism on one hand and withdrawal of those permits, internment and house arrest on the other was another way for securing many of the Arabs votes went to Mapai. According to Jiryis (1976: 50), in every Knesset elections Mapai managed to produce four or five Arab members

of Knesset who were tied to it. However, such “methods were not reserved only for the Knesset elections but were used during the elections of local councils in the Arab villages and were eventually applied whenever the military government chose to interfere in any popular activity among the Arabs, political or social” (ibid: 50).

Warning against entrenching the colonial legacy of helping the *makhateer* get elected for local elections, an *Al-Itihad* article written as early as 14 March 1949 entitled ‘On the Election of Village *Makhateer*: a Method Used by the Mandate which Brought Many Catastrophes on the Villages: Reject this Method and Pursue Democracy,’ urged people to reject such undemocratic colonial legacy. The article wrote that the “*makhateer* are far from being capable of fulfilling their duties - towards the citizens. Many if not all of them come from big landowners families, who were chosen at the time of the British rule to secure the government’s interests. A testimony to this is the thirty years of British occupation that left the Arab villages in stagnant conditions, without even one step forward towards development. Those *makhateer* were not elected by the people. Many of them collaborated with the colonialists against the people, and were financially rewarded by the Mandate government ... when the massacre against the Palestinians started, this section of people had contributed to the transfer of peasants ... the Israelis are carrying on this legacy.”

The article goes on to describe how the Israeli government, which did allow the Arabs to vote for the Knesset, had deprived them the right to elect their own representatives in the village, where they could potentially have power over administering their affairs. In villages where there were different religions, a policy of divide and rule and ethnicisation was pursued. “The military governor, together with the head of the

police and a few other officers had gathered the heads of families and asked them to nominate candidates for the *mukhtar* position on a religious basis” (ibid).

Umm al-Fahem was no exception. As mentioned previously, the first step taken by the military governor in the village was to meet with the *makhateer* who, as the numerous reports in *Al-Itihad* accounted, became tied with an umbilical cord to the authorities and in many cases served as a fig leaf for the latter oppressive polices.<sup>192</sup> Not only did they play a crucial role in encouraging the transfer of Palestinians to the Jordanian side, they also worked as part of the surveillance regime. For example, ballot boxes for Knesset elections were placed in their houses as well as in the military government headquarters. Just before the second elections to the Knesset, Fahmawis outraged by the undemocratic move, addressed the elections committee to place the ballot boxes in neutral places, as required by law (*Al-Itihad* 23 June 1951).<sup>193</sup>

Another important role assumed by the *makhateer* and other government beneficiaries related to land grabbing. They aided the government by targeting vulnerable, weak and despairing sections of society by making them sell their land cheaply. One of the research interviewees told the story of how a ‘land pimp’ took advantage of his vulnerable conditions; being unemployed, illiterate, with an ill wife whose medical

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<sup>192</sup> In official state ceremonies, the military government made sure its beneficiaries class was being invited, as in the case of inaugurating the settlement of Mi-Ami in 1963, which was built on Umm al-Fahem’s land. See article in ‘A Bit of Shame...You Those who Revive the Barren Land...by Removing the Arab Farmers from their Land’, *Al-Itihad*, 13 December 63 [Arabic].

<sup>193</sup> See ‘Freedom to Elect, Enough with Terror and Provocation’, *Al-Itihad*, 23 June 1951 [Arabic].

treatment was very expensive.<sup>194</sup> Ignorant of the content of the letter, the land pimp made him sign to sell his land for a very low price. A letter sent to *Al-Ithad* 10 March 1951, attesting to such collaborations reported: “The military government committee... still works on luring the citizens, by any means necessary, to sell their land to the Jewish National Fund and to transfer them to the Abdullah side. The locals refuse such disgusting methods and make it clear they are adhering to their rights as citizens.”

The communists together with other progressive, nationalist anti-tribal political groups, such as *Al-Ard* (The Land) movement resisted such policies. They urged locals not to capitulate to policies of starvation and harassment. Graffiti was another way to express their outrage, especially against land pimps. “To landowners, do not sell your land. Whoever sells his land to the Jews and speculates with them - will die. And whoever takes down this placard will also die,” read placards left outside two mosques in the village (Cohen 2010:121). These political forces often exposed both the military government and their stooges, as they interchangeably called the *makhateer*.

They also demanded a local council conducted with transparent, fair and democratic elections, free of military governor intervention be set up in their village. “The locals united to demand elections for the local council be held now, which will not be on family-basis but for the village’s interests and development. They refuse attempts to

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<sup>194</sup> Land pimps is what Palestinians call those who worked for the military government buying land from Arabs to pass to the state.

appoint a local council that will not be any better than the *makhateer*'s regime.<sup>195</sup> The people demand their representatives be elected, not appointed by the military governor. The people demand they be the sovereign of their local council, working for the village's interest," Fahmawis wrote in an *Al-Itihad* article on 19 April 1952.

Unlike other Palestinian villages that were already granted local councils and despite being the largest Palestinian village in Israel, only in June 1960 and after a long democratic struggle, was Umm al-Fahem finally allowed to have its own local government. Although control over local councils was the main autonomous source of power for the Palestinians (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003; Al Haj and Rosenfeld 1990), attaining this status proved to be the start of a long perpetual battle to achieve the right to development, equality and substantive control over their local affairs.

In Umm al-Fahem, the military government adhering to its legacy of the last decade and against the wish of people appointed a Mapai-linked leadership for the local council. The leadership was dysfunctional and incompetent, failing to deliver basic services to the residents. In 1962, the village of about 8000 (Statistical Abstract of Israel 1968 no.19: 30) had only one day-care health centre, with only one General Practitioner and two nurses working until three in the afternoon. No qualified midwife or doctors were available at night. The village whose vast majority of men worked as daily labourers in Jewish towns and cities, and whose students had to go to secondary schools in Nazareth and the Jewish city of Afula for the lack of schools in the village, suffered from severe shortages in public transport. There was only one bus service

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<sup>195</sup> The local council is what the thesis refers to as the local government or the local authority as well.

that operated only once a day traveling to Nazareth and Haifa. Most of the time the bus was crammed with between 100 and 150 passengers, including children and women. The streets were also in dire conditions, with piles of uncollected rubbish that made the entire place stink of bad smell.

Against this background of negligence and coercive intervention in internal politics by the military government, the locals organised themselves in “a popular initiative committee” that worked at the grassroots level. They distributed leaflets on the squalid conditions of the village and exposed the complicity of the stooge leadership. They managed to collect 1,500 signatures from heads of households demanding the appointed local government be dismantled and instead have an elected local government that would be accountable to its constituency, not serving the interests of the military government. Simultaneously, the communist party had, on behalf of the locals, petitioned and repeatedly questioned the Knesset along with the Ministry of Interior, demanding democratic elections be held in the village (*Al-Itihad* 14 August 1962; 7 September 1962).

When in 1973, the Fahmawis were allowed to have democratic elections, a coalition known as “the democratic coalition,” was voted in. The coalition was made up of progressive forces that included the communists and *Abnaa el-Balad* (Sons of the Land). However, in 1975 this coalition was dismantled following a decree from the Ministry of Interior which instated one of its close allies instead. Locals, headed by the democratic coalition, again led a legal and popular battle against the appointed mayor. After a High Court ruling which was in their favour, they managed to hold new elections and win the council back with new members joining the coalition (*Al-Ghad* February 1977: 4, 5 & 23; Fareed 1978: 10-11).



While in office, the coalition, spearheaded by leadership aligned with the communists, led a legal battle against the Israel Land Administration (ILA) to win land back for public use. The legal battle was successful and within a short time the local government managed to win back 2000 dunums from ILA. These were to be allocated for tackling the housing problem faced by young couples, poor and big landless households, as well as for public projects, including schools, public parks and industrial zones. However, the desire for independence in managing the village's affairs proved to be limited. The village was almost completely dependent on state financial support and therefore crippled by financial constraints, a situation that just kept deteriorating over the years, up until 1989.

Economically, the village was stripped of the majority of its farming land and had no local industries to employ its workforce. Forced proletarianisation was its destiny. The vast majority of its workforce became cheap manual workers in the Jewish labour market. "They [the Zionists] wanted us to be hewers of wood and drawers of water," said Ghassan, a novelist and retired manual worker.<sup>196</sup> Ghassan, from the age of 12, had to work in construction, fishery, coffee shops, restaurants and bakeries all over the country, from Eilat, in the very south, to Ras Al-Naqurah, in the very North. His story is representative of many workers in Umm al-Fahem.

In terms of urban infrastructure and public hygiene, the local government could not radically change the existing conditions. The village was still suffering from poor road networks, severe shortage in dustbin lorries, and no sewage system. In 1975, the

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<sup>196</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 7 August 2009.

Hebrew newspaper *Al Ha-Mishmar* reported that the socio-economic and public hygiene conditions in the village were still suffering. By 1975 there was a “shortage of 62 classrooms, to which 20 more will be added in 1976” (*Al Ha-Mishmar* 23 June 1975).<sup>197</sup> As sewage became a serious health problem, the local government asked the Ministry of Health to interfere to solve the problem by helping fit sewers (*ibid*). Their calls however had been ignored and for years to come sewage was still flowing onto the village’s streets.

On the national political arena, the new coalition, with its progressive politics was a champion of Palestinians’ rights. The local government did not confine itself to the narrow local politics of running their village. It linked its struggle for attaining its rights to the larger Palestinian common cause of achieving equal rights and land rights within Israel, and supporting the Palestinians in the West Bank for their right to self-determination. The coalition was a vocal and leading supporter of designating the 31st of March in 1976 as the annual Land Day for the Palestinians in Israel. From that date until the 1989, when the Islamist Movement won the local elections, the day was annually commemorated by a general strike and a demonstration that marched through the city’s streets and was traditionally ended with a cultural and political ceremony.

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<sup>197</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, in the same article, reported that Umm al-Fahem’s head of local government complained about the two hospitals of the Jewish towns of Hadera and Afula that refused to accept pregnant women from the village to use their birth centres.

## **Voluntary work brigades: an agency for urban generation and resistance**

From 1978 until the mid 1980s, the local government together with *Abnaa el-Balad*, and other politically progressive forces took the lead in organising voluntary work brigades in the village. The brigades that used to last for a few days and dubbed by locals “public and dignity weddings” emerged to address some of the acute deficiencies in public services and urban infrastructure. Their underlying message was that Palestinians were capable of constructively taking responsibility for their towns and villages. While such brigades did not provide a sustainable radical solution to the core reasons behind such problems, they did, however, play a pivotal role in boosting people’s morale. In addition to their educational and symbolic value, the brigades were an embodiment of people’s agency, creativity, determination, resilience and fraternal solidarity. They were an act of citizenship par excellence.

First started in Nazareth under the communist leadership in 1975, the brigades were a political statement against the state’s financial discrimination and its racially motivated negligence of Palestinian localities’ infrastructures and public services. “It is the authorities’ policy of discrimination and oppression which is the main reason for the accumulated problems in our Arab villages. Had the authorities allocated enough budget, or given the Arab localities what they deserved, just like what they give to Jewish localities, we would not have faced such a crisis in the Arab sector,” reported Waild Asliyyih, a lawyer and a member of Umm al-Fahem’s first brigade organising committee, to *Al-Ghad* in May 1979 (Abu Kheit 1979).

The brigades were led by youngsters, including female activists, who organised themselves in a committee that was responsible for liaising with the local government

as well as mobilising people to take part in the brigades. In the run-up to the brigades, they were in charge of organising public talks on public health and hygiene in the village. When the first work brigade took place during the spring holiday of April 1978, the tasks that were accomplished included “cleaning the village streets of rubbish and sewage, painting schools’ walls and drawing murals and building stairs and a wall in one of the mosques” (ibid). To cover the costs of construction materials and other resources, the brigades mobilised local resources: charity and contributions pledged by individuals, businesses and communist branches of other villages and towns.

Young women were particularly visible in the brigade, both as organisers and activists. For the organisers this fact was worth publicising and reporting to the press considering the gendered-conservative nature of Umm al-Fahem. “...150 young women took part in the brigade, challenging the patriarchal norms of society. They took part in almost all the activities... No doubt that their participation had given the brigade a special character. It was an encouraging factor, despite the fact that those women were faced with opposition by some religious sections,” said Hanan Murad, a member of the organising committee, commenting on the first brigade (ibid).

The ensuing yearly brigades took a national, international and cultural dimension, crossing age, national, spatial, religious and gender boundaries. They became a “national feast” as some of the research interviewees recalled, and were “a public meeting point of people from different backgrounds and different nationalities, different age and gender groups.” Locals opened their houses to host and welcome international solidarity activists who came from different countries, including the United States of America, France, Germany, Belgium, Japan, China, the now ex-

Soviet Union, Israeli Jews and Palestinians from within Israel and the West Bank who defied police warnings and restrictions on their participation (Mjalee 1987). As well as accomplishing construction projects, in a comradely and collaborative environment, the brigades were accompanied by cultural festivities. These included theatre, dance performances and patriotic and resistance music events.

Mufeed Sidawi from *Al-Ghad* magazine, in May 1985, interviewed a number of participants in an attempt to capture the sense of solidarity, commitment and festivity of the sixth brigade. A 45- year-old Jewish participant from Ramat-Gan who had been taking part for the third time, told him “[n]o doubt that the brigades bring the two peoples together...I feel a sense of satisfaction that I’m taking part in the development of Umm al-Fahem and I’m happy to have met friends and brothers from across the country.” Another participant, a father of four, said of his impression taking part for the first time in such an activity: “I’m happy to take part in a collective activity. Such work expresses the spirit of challenging the dark forces that wanted Umm al-Fahem to be backward. However, with our people’s, brothers’ and sisters’ determination, Umm al-Fahem will be the beacon for our people.” A 23-year-old blacksmith from Nazareth said: “I’m not only working, but expressing my solidarity with our Arab local councils which experience state oppression and under-budgeting, especially Umm al-Fahem. I took part in all six brigades of Umm al-Fahem and all of those of Nazareth... In the first day of this brigade we worked on the sewage project in al-Hawa area...” *Al-Gad* (ibid) reported that the brigade was very festive, with participants working till the very late hours of the evening, accomplishing one project after the other, in a very comradely and collaborative spirit.

The accomplishments of the sixth brigade included the building of a basketball court in Omar Ibin Al-Khattab school, tarmacking roads: a 360-metre of AL-Ghazalat road, 150 metre of Al-Thurwa road, and 250 metre of a road at Ein-Al-mghara, fitting an iron-gate for the secondary school and planting flowers, grass and an olive tree in its garden (Sidawi 1985:10-11). Again, women had a visible role in making the brigades successful, with some participating in the field, hand in hand with other volunteers, while others assuming more traditional roles: working in the kitchens, cooking meals for the hundreds of volunteers.<sup>198</sup>

### ***Al-Hadaf: a cultural empire***

Umm al-Fahem of the 1970s and 80s was buzzing with political and cultural activities. In 1985, a group of young politically conscious and active graduate students of theatre and law, many of whom were affiliated with the leftist nationalist movement of *Abnaa el-Balad* set up an association called *Al-Hadaf*, the goal.<sup>199</sup> *Al-Hadaf* was a “cultural empire” in the city, said Muhammed, one of its co-founders.<sup>200</sup> Promoting culture and conscious art was its flagship. Its principal objective was to build a cultural, artistic and intellectual base in Umm al-Fahem. Through its activities it sought to cross the gender and age divides by incorporating into its work the two most marginalised groups in society: women and youngsters. It recognised the importance of gender empowerment for women who were under triple oppression:

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<sup>198</sup> Chapter 7 talks about the voluntary Islamic work brigades that the Islamic Movement started to organise around mid 1980s.

<sup>199</sup> *Al-Hadaf* which in Arabic means the goal or the objective, was the name of the Public Front for Palestine (PLFP) newsletter.

<sup>200</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem 12 July 2009.

social/patriarchal, economic and national. For *Al-Hadaf*, those women were the mothers of future generations and their emancipation was to be encouraged through education and work.

Within five years, *Al-Hadaf* managed to set up five cultural centres in the city. These included an art centre, a women's centre, a computer centre, a nursery and a public library. The art centre hosted weekly cultural activities: a film screening, art exhibitions of local, regional and national Palestinian artists, music and dance events, music classes and talks on the history of Palestine, its art and politics. One of the main art exhibitions was of the Palestinian political cartoonist Naji Al-Ali, who was noted for his criticism of the Arab regimes, the divided tribal Arab mentality and Israel.<sup>201</sup>

Setting up a theatre group was one of the art centre's main activities. The cofounder, himself a theatre graduate of the Hebrew University and cofounder of the first national Palestinian theatre, trained the group. For him theatre was "one of the most sublime of all collective arts...It is a holistic art ... encompassing all in one..." Throughout its existence, the centre held regular theatre workshops and training. Their aim was to collectively produce theatre work. Its success in this area however was limited for the lack of facilities and financial support. "Theatre needs a state...and we are stateless," said Muhammed.<sup>202</sup> On the whole, the art centre became very popular among people and managed to attract a group of regulars. It demonstrated the

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<sup>201</sup> Naji Al-Ali's political cartoons cost him his life. He was assassinated in London in 1987.

<sup>202</sup> Some of those who were active in the group sought professional university training and became leading figures in national theatres.

thirst for cultural activities in the city. The secondary school was the venue for its extracurricular activities.

The women's centre provided varied activities. These included lectures, sports, music classes and "know your homeland" trips to uprooted Palestinian villages. The computer centre was the first of its kind amongst the entire Palestinian community in Israel. In 1985, it had ten computers and within two years it trained at least three thousand students. The fees charged were symbolic and affordable to working class children. The nursery was founded in 1986 and was among the first in the Palestinian community. The aim behind it was twofold: to encourage women to go to work and to invest in children's education. Unemployed women could also send their kids so that they would have more free time for themselves. The public library, a modest building, had 15,000 books. The books were available for borrowing and reading at the library. As well as offering space for reading, the library served as a meeting and planning educational space.

*Al-Hadaf* was run mostly on voluntary basis. It got its financial support from Palestinian funding sources based abroad and from the symbolic fees that were collected from the public in return for the services they received. After almost 5 years of hard work, two major events brought the cultural empire to an end. The first reason was the rise of the Islamic Movement to power, which sought to promote primarily its own agenda. For the Islamic Movement, the association presented a counterculture which was not congruent with its missionary agenda of building a new society according to the Islamic way of life. By refusing to allow *Al-Hadaf* to use schools for its activities, the Movement made it difficult for the former to survive.



The second event was the break out of the first Intifada in December 1987. Foreign funding was channelled to the West Bank and Gaza. The money went to provide essentials. “Not on bread alone a man can live,” said Muhammed. “A hungry person cannot be creative and does not have the time to produce,” he said. “We’re still hoping that the Palestinian cause will be resolved... At the time, more than today, hope seemed closer to become a reality... there was a revolution ... the Palestinians were not the only ones united about their legitimate right for self-determination,” he said.

**Umm al-Fahem: “a city without a sewage system... without a cultural club... or a public park”<sup>203</sup>**

On 11 November 1985, Umm al-Fahem was officially declared a city. It was the first Palestinian locality to be declared a city under Israel. In the words of Michal Miron of the daily Israeli newspaper of *Yediot Ahronot* (12 Nov 1985) Umm al-Fahem “ceased to be the biggest village in the world...” The day was celebrated by Palestinian press, as one of festivities. Local people, Palestinian leadership from Israel and Communist Party leaders, who since 1979 had spearheaded the struggle in the Knesset to achieve the recognition of a city, all participated in the ceremony, which took place in the the secondary school courtyard. In his speech at the official ceremony, Hashim Mahameed, the city’s mayor, stressed that declaring Umm al-Fahem a city “was not a gesture but a right” which “comes at the hardest of all times, never experienced before” (*Al-Itihad* 12 Nov 1985). “The fact that we are a city today is a product of a

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<sup>203</sup> Excerpts from an interview with Umm al-Fahem’s mayor with journalist Miron of *Yediot Ahronot* (12 November 1985).

persistent struggle...it is psychologically a nice feeling. I hope the [national] government offices will seriously address Umm al-Fahem's problems as a city. We are a city without a sewage system, without a football ground, without a cultural club," Mahameed told *Yediot Ahronot* reporter Michal Miron (Miron 1985).

The long-awaited day was boycotted by both the Minister of Interior, Rabbi Peretz, and the Minister for Arab Affairs, Uzi Weizman. Even their representative failed to arrive on time. "Their miniature district officer, Yusif Qveeti, whom they sent ... had arrived late, at 1:45 pm instead of eleven o'clock in the morning, just towards the end of the ceremony. The officer had to hand in the documents which officially confer the municipal status," wrote Miron (*ibid*). Not only did Rabbi Peretz boycott the ceremony, he also waged a political smear campaign against the city. His campaign was particularly against its leader Hashim Mahameed.

The grounds for both the official boycott and the ensuing smear campaign were politically motivated. According to the ministry's version, the campaign was instigated by a leaflet that Mahameed's local government distributed in the city on 9 October 1985 (one month before the declaration) describing the Israeli Army as one of "humiliation and oppression."<sup>204</sup> From the local government's point of view the minister de-contextualised the leaflet by concentrating solely on the criticism at the conduct of the Israeli Army. The minister ignored the fact that the leaflet was also about budget disparities between those allocated to the army and settlements on one

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<sup>204</sup> See (*Al-Ghad* December 1985, p 4), and (*Al-Itihad*, 12 November 1985).

hand, and those allocated to Umm al-Fahem, on the other (*Al- Itihad*, 12 Nov 1985).<sup>205</sup>

Mahameed expressing his frustration with financial strangulation and the occupation policies that spend millions of US dollars on the settlements enterprise and the occupation apparatuses, told Miron “[w]e are asking to double our budget...we have got no budget for development. There are disparities between the budgets given to Arab localities and those to the settlements. The per-capita budget of Fahmawis is one-third of their Jewish fellow citizens. We will not capitulate to the existing conditions. We will go on strike. We are demanding to live in this country as equal citizens. We would have loved the minister Peretz to have come...the school choir sang songs both in Hebrew and Arabic...the occupation cannot be enlightening, polite, nor wonderful.”<sup>206</sup>

Triumphalism was blended with caution and determination to achieve what locals insisted was their right to move on from nominality to content; demanding the administrative status of a city was being practically and substantively materialised and demonstrated in its urban landscape. The battle for a functional city is a political one. It is against the authorities whose aims and objectives and policies, as articulated by

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<sup>205</sup> Budgets have been and still are the living evidence of the discriminatory policy of the state against its Palestinian citizens. In the 1985 the Arab local authorities were granted only 2.3 per cent of the total local authorities budgets, despite constituting 16 per cent of Israel’s population. For more details see (*Al-Ghad* December 1985).

<sup>206</sup> The sentence which appeared in the leaflet and had outraged the Minister of Interior was ‘Do you as a citizen know that the total investment for the development of settlements in the west bank, without the general budget allocated to the army of aggression, violence and humiliation, what is called the security forces, reach the total of one billion and seven hundred dollar for the years 68 till 84.’ \$ 1,700,000,000.

the mayor in an interview with *Al-Ghad* (1985:5) "are to keep our people starved, ill, and living in sewage, without schools and under conditions not fit for human beings."

Newspaper articles on the city and fieldwork collaborators all agreed that to fulfil the right to the city, the state policy of discrimination and racism had to be profoundly transformed. It had to include an increase in allocated budgets, along with a change in policies pertaining to land and spatial planning. As Mahameed said in an interview a month after the declaration "how could we carry out projects?! The received budgets are not enough even for patching the streets of our villages" (ibid: p 5).

The local historian, Tayseer Ighbariyih in an article to *Al-Itihad* (18 Nov 1985), entitled "We Have Struggled to Achieve the Title, Now it's Time to Change the Content,"<sup>207</sup> wrote: "[w]hen the communists got to power they planned many infrastructural projects, such as building schools, paving roads, connecting the city to communication and water grids. However, because of the lack of budget, many of those projects, such as the sewerage system, could not be completed ...This meant that sewage was pouring in the streets and the roads were potholed. The racist and discriminatory policies of the authorities are to blame for this as they give their budgets in droplets" (Ibid).

For Fahmawis the way to materialising the right to the city was as challenging as ever. As put by Mahameed, "we have struggled to achieve our right to become a city.

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<sup>207</sup> Although Ighbariyih does not explicitly say what he means by content, it is alluded from his depiction of the city's conditions at the time of the declaration. He criticises the policies which curbed the fulfilment of planned urban projects.

However, we are now up against a battle to achieve both the right and the content of what that means,” (*Al-Ghad* 7 December 1985: 37).<sup>208</sup> As well as improving the city’s inadequate infrastructure, other hurdles had to be overcome. The most acute among these are land and spatial planning policies, house demolition and pending demolition orders. According to *Yediot Ahronot* of 22 November (Nevo 1985) about forty per cent of Fahmawis lived in unauthorised houses. The next chapter will discuss the burning themes of land and planning policies in the city.

## **Conclusion**

Through employing historical and sociological analysis, the chapter has discussed the workings of (post)colonial governmentality in the way Umm al-Fahem was ruled and governed from the time it was handed over to Israel in 1949 up until the mid 1980s when it was declared a city. Through discussing the different technologies that made up this governmentality, whether the repressive and controlling direct military rule, policies of divide and rule, co-option, the carrot and the stick, criminalisation of resisting political activists, or political proposals to redesign geographical borders so that Umm al-Fahem no longer existed as part of Israel, this chapter aimed to illustrate three main objectives. First, to discuss some of the historical factors that shape the city. Secondly to demonstrate that the technologies that constituted governmentality, including the village/city’s materiality and the negligence of its urban infrastructure and public hygiene, were ones of control with the overall objective of producing

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<sup>208</sup> ‘We Are Up Against Screaming Challenges in the Battle for Survival, Equality and Progress: an Interview with the Head of Umm al-Fahem’s Municipality,’ *Al-Ghad* Vol 7, December 1985: 4,5, and 37. [Arabic]

domesticated, docile and suspended citizens and places. Lastly, to expose the racialised and Manichaean nature of citizenship and to question what the right to the city means.

The chapter identified three historic periods. All along these periods, defiance, agency and determination demonstrated by Fahmawis to achieve substantive citizenship and have a functioning local government and city were a parallel thread to the oppressive and at times repressive technologies of control. The first period was from 1949 until 1966. This was the era of direct military rule that sought to control every aspect of everyday life of Palestinians. This period was distinctively Manichaean and repressive as military rule was only applied to Palestinian-populated areas. The military governor who enjoyed almost full impunity could do whatever he thought suitable in the name of security and order. Criminalisation of political activists who protested against his rule was a common practice. The chapter also discussed the objectives behind this rule, which as well as controlling and socially and spatially fragmenting the Palestinians had other political ends. These included further land dispossession, preventing the return of Palestinian refugees, and securing political support for the ruling party of Mapai.

The second era was roughly from the early 1960s until the mid 1970s. This was the era of the struggle to achieve the democratic right for a local government. Umm al-Fahem despite being the biggest village at the time and unlike other Palestinian villages up until the 1960s did not have a local government of its own. When it finally did, the military government was the one that appointed leadership which was close to it. Fahmawis again launched a campaign asserting their right to a democratically run

local government, elected through democratic elections, without the interference of the military government.

The third period was from the mid 1970s until the mid 1980s. This was the era of self-government through the democratically elected local government. Despite the few gains that the local government had achieved, particularly in relation to winning some land back from the Israel Land Administration, Fahmawis' dream of independently running their affairs quickly proved to be limited. They were still heavily dependent on the state to develop their village/city. The economic dependency and the racially-motivated policies meant that Umm al-Fahem was still in a state of underdevelopment.

In the face of discriminatory policies and harsh socio-economic conditions that left Umm al-Fahem with poor urban infrastructures, and poor public hygiene, Fahmawis' agency and sense of solidarity were invoked again. Through organising voluntary work brigades and setting up *Al-Hadaf* cultural association all independently of the state, Fahmawis tried to constructively take responsibility over their citizenship and their city. The very materiality of the city was an agent for mobilising people to act together and bring their agency and creativity out.

The chapter ends by discussing the period when Umm al-Fahem was declared a city. At the heart of this section stands the question of the materiality of the city and citizenship and the relationship the state has to the city. It illustrated that the struggle to a substantive right to the city is not divorced from the struggle to substantive citizenship.

The next chapter deconstructs the subject of land and spatial planning as a technology of control and governmentality and the effects they have on the city's socio-spatiality and economy. It demonstrates the Manichaeian, racialised nature of the planning system that works towards producing controlled, domesticated and suspended city and citizens, thus questioning what the right to the city, urbanity and urbanisation mean under these conditions.



## Chapter 6

### **Eat, drink, get married: absencing master plans and the production of entropy and suspension<sup>209</sup>**

There is no city in the world without a master plan, without the potential to develop, without civil service offices, without infrastructure...cultural and science centres...places where young boys and girls can hang out...instead of driving their cars aimlessly.

Tayseer, Umm al-Fahem 2009



Figure 14: Surviving aubergines, demolished site, Umm al-Fahem, July 2009

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<sup>209</sup> Eat, drink, get married is inspired by interviewees' account of their city, its materiality, and the little opportunities it offers.

“Last night, late at night and out of the blue we were woken up by phone calls telling us to rush to our store as heavily armed police were about to demolish it. We immediately rushed there, but were not allowed in. The police surrounded all the entrances to the store and refused to let anyone in.<sup>210</sup> We begged to no avail to be let in to check what was going on. Their refusal made it clear to us that they were demolishing the site. For those who wonder why they [the planning authorities] wanted to demolish our store, the answer is that we are part and parcel of the Arab community which since the establishment of the state has been engaged in the painful, costly and unguaranteed struggle of getting building permits.” This was part of what Suliman said in an interview with him shortly after his 600 m<sup>2</sup> fruit and vegetable store in the market area of Umm al-Fahem was demolished (figure 14) (field interview 3 July 2009).

Throughout the fieldwork in Umm al-Fahem and while staying with my family in the neighbouring town, I felt the heat and tension generated by the unresolved issue of the demolition of unauthorised homes/structures (which the state calls illegal), and the selective deployment and enforcement of the law.<sup>211</sup> As illustrated by the opening quote, almost every single field interviewee when asked whether Umm al-Fahem was a city would sooner or later bring up the issue of planning and the subsequent house

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<sup>210</sup> Special police units often accompany demolition agents sent by the planning authorities. The units are the Israel Border Police and the Special Unit Patrol Police. While Border Police officers receive combat training and are trained to deal with riot control, Special Patrol Unit officers come from combat units and are therefore recruited from the army and Border Police. Their presence raises a number of questions around military force in a (post)colonial setting: what kind of function do they play? And why is it that they are always there? Is it a reminder of the repressive nature of the state? Is it an assertion of who is in control? Or is it the violent nature of the colonial structure?

<sup>211</sup> I witnessed a high presence of armed forces in my hometown after a site was demolished at night and a protest was called for the next morning. As in Umm al-Fahem’s case, the demolished site was close to the trans-Israel highway, road number 6.

demolition spectre as a major factor which perpetuated the nominal status of their city and its arrested development. They believed that spatial planning policies, often articulated in terms of absence of a master plan for the city, were one of the main obstacles to the city's development and socio-economic growth.

Against this brief background, this chapter critically engages with governmentality through the subject of spatial planning and land ownership. It deconstructs the subject at work under (post)colonial conditions and its socio-spatial and economic implications as demonstrated in the case of Umm al-Fahem.<sup>212</sup> While the chapter acknowledges the importance of theoretically engaging with the subject of planning, by elaborating on its system and properties, and its political, philosophical and cultural underpinnings, for the purpose of scope, it limits itself to only touching on these issues in the passing.<sup>213</sup> The chapter's overall objective is to discuss how both planning and land ownership and policies shape the very materiality and character of Umm al-Fahem: its present and future trajectory, its everyday life, its socio-spatial make-up and the prospects for socio-economic and spatial developments. It seeks to illustrate that spatial planning is not abstract and cannot be reduced to lines and colours produced on a piece of paper called a map; a master plan or a detailed plan. Rather, its interventionist character defines and reflects existential political and private questions as large as state-community relations and as small as the individual family unit.

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<sup>212</sup> The subject of the land system was discussed in more detail in chapter 4: Israel's colonial *nomos*.

<sup>213</sup> For a detailed account on critical reading of the subject of urban and regional planning in relation to its impact on social and political relations, power and resources, as well its political, philosophical, cultural and material underpinnings, see Yiftachel, O. Little, J. et al (eds), (2001) *The Power of Planning: Spaces of Control and Transformation*. Dordrecht : Kluwer Academic Publishers.

The chapter illustrates how spatial planning in Israel is politicised and racialised. Critical reading of the state's policies and their deployment finds that planning is employed to serve political ends, not the wellbeing of all citizens. More specifically the chapter argues that the state, through its centralised, comprehensive and hierarchised planning system, employs spatial planning as a powerful technology of control and governmentality that works towards producing suspended, docile, socially-controlled, privatised and atomised Palestinian bodies and spaces. Operating in a racialised Manichaean context, this technology with its inevitable coercive properties contributes to the state of urbicide by deliberately detaining and withholding the economic and spatial growth of the city. The chapter in other words seeks to question and unpack how Palestinians are deprived of the right to the city. Hence, the chapter's title; perhaps there is nothing more representative of the materiality of Umm al-Fahem than "eat, drink, get married."

The chapter illustrates the arguments through discussing three main subjects that are arranged across three sections. First, the production of entropy, that is the state of disorder in the city, the shortage in public space, the housing crisis, and the implications these have on everyday life in the city and its very meaning. In this section, the chapter discusses how, in 2009 Umm al-Fahem was left with no approved and up-to-date master plan, and that the only plan available for the city was the 1965 master plan that the Ministry of Interior put together, without consulting the local population, at the time of the military government, when Umm al-Fahem was still a

village of about 10,000 residents.<sup>214</sup> Although incompatible with the changing reality, the plan was still in place. This was despite the existence of an, as yet unapproved, updated master plan. The first section of the chapter discusses how the private tenure of land passed down through inheritance combines with the private provision of housing to affect the very make-up of society, increasing social control and putting into question the meaning of the city as a heterogeneous impersonal site.

The second subject is about the production of reciprocal exclusion and how planning is employed to keep communities apart. For this, the chapter visits two master plans: Umm al-Fahem's master plan that was finalised by the city's local government in the 1980s but was declined by Haifa's district planning committee, and the regional master plan, TAMAM 6, that was produced by the latter in 2004.<sup>215</sup> And the third subject is about arrested and racialised development at work. It discusses TAMAM 6 in relation to Umm al-Fahem and the battle that the latter is leading to amend the plan in ways which service the city and its citizens. Two different, even conflicting, visions stand at the heart of the dispute between the two sides. One is of arrested development, or even de-development, and another of development and insistence on getting out of the state of suspension and rudimentariness, that is about living to fulfil basic existential functions. Discussing the demolition of the market on one hand, and citing examples of development in two Jewish neighbouring areas on the other,

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<sup>214</sup> In 1961 Umm al-Fahem's population was 7,492 and in 1972 it was 13,382 (Central Bureau of Statistics 1995).

<sup>215</sup> The district planning committee is also referred to in this chapter as the regional planning committee. The two concepts are used interchangeably. Umm al-Fahem is part of the district of Haifa. Therefore, Haifa's district planning committee is in charge of planning matters pertaining to Umm al-Fahem. TAMAM is the Hebrew abbreviation for district master plan.

constitutes a major part of this section that unravels the racialised character of planning. The chapter ends with the resilience and defiance of people in the face of controlling planning policies.

The chapter draws mostly on primary resources. These include interviews with Umm al-Fahem's planning department, and Fahmawis' experiences as gathered throughout the field. It also uses the Ministry of Interior website to collect information about the Planning and Building Law and its regulations, as well as to provide an image of Haifa's regional master plan, in relation to Umm al-Fahem. An internal document produced by Umm al-Fahem's planning department regarding its objection to Haifa's regional plan, submitted to the national council for planning in 2004, provides another valuable source that helps shed light on the impact of regional planning on the city, the dispute between the two different sides, and their respective visions for the city. The images used in the chapter, whether photographs or maps, are illustrative and complementary to the written text.



## The production of entropy



Figure 15: Al-Andalus street, Umm al-Fahem



Have you been to al-Andalus street? Asked the strategic planner. “You should go there,” he said. A few days later when I met with the city’s architect, I was asked the same question and was given the same recommendation. Al-Andalus street (figure 15)

is located in one of the four *Shikunat*, built on land the city has won back from Israel Land Administration (ILA) in the 1970s. The legal battle against ILA resulted in 2005 dunums to the benefit of Umm al-Fahem's residents. According to the court ruling, the land was to be divided between residential and public buildings: 1005 dunums to be allocated for housing and 1000 dunums for public buildings. The land for housing was to be marketed to local residents as empty plots of land, through a "build your house" scheme.<sup>216</sup> The winning candidates lease the empty land from ILA for a period of 49 years, at a highly subsidised rate.<sup>217</sup> The local government prepares detailed plans for each *Shikun* according to regulations set by the 1965 Planning and Building Law and does the required infrastructural work, including paving streets and connecting to sewage, etc.<sup>218</sup> All that is left for winning candidates is to pay for the cost of the local authority's work and build their houses in the way they see fit.<sup>219</sup>

*Al-Shikunat* is the Arabic plural word for *Shikun* in Hebrew, which means public housing. In the context of Umm al-Fahem, they are cited as a living example of what the local government and its Fahamawi citizen are capable of achieving when the

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<sup>216</sup> The scheme started to operate in 1990s.

<sup>217</sup> Israel Land Administration has a priority scheme in place for candidates. Those serving in the state security services are given first priority, followed by individuals with disabilities, then those who have no private land for building their own houses, and, lastly any other members of the public. The local government of Umm al-Fahem added one more criterion: any candidate had to have been living in the city for at least 5 years prior to placing an application for a piece of land.

<sup>218</sup> A detailed plan is the lowest amongst all plans (national, regional and local master plans). As implied by its name, it includes details that are not mentioned in the master plan. According to the Ministry of Interior, this plan is authorised to issue building permits and therefore has to include instructions in relation to five issues: land use, building size, division into plots for construction, building line, and building height. A detailed plan is authorised by a local or regional planning committees. For details see: Ministry of Interior website: (<http://www.mifam.org.il/?CategoryID=1356&ArticleID=1504&SearchParam=תכנית+מפורטת>) [Hebrew].

<sup>219</sup> The terms local authority and local government are used interchangeably. Both refer to Umm al-Fahem's municipality.



state and its planning authorities are collaborative. The *Al-Shikunat* are presented in complete contrast to the frustrating materiality of the city and its planning nightmare chaos caused by the state's centralised, hierarchised and racialised planning policies which render the power the local government has over planning negligible.<sup>220</sup> This condition gets even more complicated and more challenging in light of the private land tenure in Umm al-Fahem, the private or more specifically the self-provision of housing, and the city's very limited, almost non-existent, access to state land.<sup>221</sup>

For Umm al-Fahem's professional planning team, the *Al-Shikunat* provided a true sense of satisfaction, and an overcoming of the otherwise prevailing feeling of impotency and frustration they experienced on regular basis when planning for the rest of the city. For them, the *Al-Shikunat* were sites where scientific planning - that is planning for order and the wellbeing of the citizen - was made material. As well as being built on state land, the planning authorities, the official state body in charge of all issues pertaining to planning including approving plans and issuing building permits, were relatively collaborative. The detailed plans the local government

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<sup>220</sup> Israel's centralised and hierarchised planning system is very comprehensive, controlling everything from state-wide strategies to the issuing of building permits at a local level (Planning and Building Law 1965; Yiftachel 1992). Its upper ranked authorities enjoy extensive power of implementation, while local authorities enjoy "only limited autonomy for discretion, which is mainly confined to development control issues" (Yiftachel 1992: 93). For more details on this system with its racialised and even non-transparent mechanism and the power planning authorities enjoy see: Alexander, E. R., Alterman, R. and Law-Yone, H. (1983) 'Evaluating Plan Implementation: The National Statutory Planning System in Israel', *Progress in Planning*, 20, pp. 101-172, Yiftachel, O. (1992) *Planniing a Mixed Region in Israel: the Political Geography of Arab-Jewish Relations in the Galilee*. Aldershot: Avebury. Yiftachel also wrote about how the planning system through its population dispersal policies worked to reproduce social and class divisions within the Israeli Jewish society itself. For more details on this see, Yiftachel, O. (2001) 'The Consequences of Planning Control: Mizrahi Jews in Israel's 'Development Towns'', in Yiftachel, O., Little, J. et al (eds) 2001 *The Power of Planning: Spaces of Control and Transformation*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 117-134.

<sup>221</sup> Generally, Palestinians are deprived of the right to equal access to state land, as discussed in chapter 4 on Israel's *nomos*. Therefore, winning land for public use in Umm al-Fahem is the exception not the norm.

prepare for these areas get approved relatively quicker and with less hassle compared to the rest of the city. “I really enjoy planning on empty land...I feel a sense of professional satisfaction. I do everything perfectly...When you enter one of these neighbourhoods you feel that it is new, it is organised and planned according to modern standards,” said the city’s architect (see figure 15).<sup>222</sup>

It does not take long to experience the planning entropy and disorder that both the city’s professional team and the city’s residents complain about. By taking a walk or driving a car in the city one feels the sharp contrast between the *Al-Shikunat* and the rest of the city. In the latter one feels the claustrophobic effect of (non)planning and the preciousness of space. In downtown Umm al-Fahem, the streets are narrow and the construction is dense. Buildings are in zero distance from each other and from the road. It does not take more than two cars to pass through a road to cause traffic panic and disorder. Pedestrians, merchandise stalls, cars, kids and industrial workshops, all compete to use the streets, sometimes all at once. As the images below illustrate (figures 16-18), washing lines, household gas bottles, people socialising in the street, moving and parked cars are all part of everyday street life in the city. Tension is inevitable, but learning to collaborate and negotiate the road is also commonplace. In certain situations passers-by become simultaneously the traffic police and the traffic light, often using available rubbish bins to regulate traffic (see figure 19).

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<sup>222</sup> Interviewed on 22 June 2009



Figure 16: Gas bottles, kids, passersby and construction material



Figure 17: Washing line





Figure 18: Street life, social life



Figure 19: Rubbish bins and traffic jams

So having a pavement to walk on without the prospect of getting disrupted by a parked car, enjoying a stroll in the city without the gaze of people sitting outside their houses and shops (figure 20), having a place to socialise other than a local shop or the side of the street, having enough playgrounds for kids to play and feel safe other than the street, having a green area other than the cemetery, or having a cinema and a theatre are all but a dream that remains the property of the world of should be. For the locals the 'should be' state of being they find themselves dreaming about questions the very meaning of the city.



Figure 20: Gazing eyes

How come these basic activities and basic services are a dream? How come the entire city, of which 30.4 per cent of its population is below the age of 9<sup>223</sup> has got only two playgrounds which are not only very modest but are also located on the edges of the city? As the city's strategic planner put it, "I know that in the civilised people language having a playground with few swings for kids to play is not complementary. In the reality of Umm al-Fahem it is a dream."<sup>224</sup> How come buildings are demolished in the city and many others are awaiting pending demolition orders? Why is it that some buildings get demolished while others not?

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<sup>223</sup> See Local Authorities in Israel 2005; Ministry of Interior publication number 1295 [Hebrew].

<sup>224</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 9 June 2009.





Figure 21: No where to go but to the street



Figure 22: Playground

## The 1965 master plan: incompatible yet in place

Again, the answer to these questions lies in the state's land and planning system and policies and the subsequent land and housing conditions in the city. The comprehensive centralised and hierarchised planning system, set up by the Planning and Building Law 1965, means that any use of land and real-estate (construction, demolition, development, etc) requires a permit from the local planning committee.<sup>225</sup> However, the local committee works only according to the master plan and its regulations. Therefore the latter, through zoning that is the general designation of land use, is the factor that determines what is and is not permitted on a given piece of land, how many structures are allowed to be built on it, their location (where in the piece of land building is allowed), and even the timing (once all the required conditions are met) (Israel's Ministry of interior; planning administration).<sup>226</sup> The plan decides upon the what, the where, the how and the when.<sup>227</sup>

Under normal conditions, a master plan should take care of the present, future and even acknowledges the historical needs of a given population and their city. It is

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<sup>225</sup> Planning and Building Law (1965) is the principal law regulating the activities of the planning system. The legislation is based on British law inherited from the mandate era. Over the years the law has been modified numerous times. The law sets the foundations for the planning system, its structure, types of master plan, issuing permits and penalties for offenders of law. The law includes more than 350 articles and more than 52,000 word. The Ministry of Interior's website acknowledges that, because of its large scope, not all lawyers are familiar with its details and its related rulings. "Pertaining to getting advice for planning and construction matters, it is recommended to address an attorney with specialty in the subject," notes the Ministry of Interior's website <http://www.mifam.org.il/?CategoryID=1483&ArticleID=1603> [Hebrew].

<sup>226</sup> See *ibid*: <http://www.mifam.org.il/?CategoryID=1342&ArticleID=1499> [Hebrew]. For further detail on zoning see <http://www.mifam.org.il/?CategoryID=1413&ArticleID=1534&SearchParam=הקרקע+יעודי> [Hebrew].

<sup>227</sup> According to Israel's Planning and Building Law, any structure that was built without a building permit or contrary to the plan is a criminal offence. Therefore the demolition of what it calls illegal structures is a relapse and is not a crime. As well as demolition, the offender could also receive a fine. See *ibid*: <http://www.moin.gov.il/Subjects/DestructionAndImprisonment/Pages/default.aspx> [Hebrew].



designed to address, regulate and solve its infrastructural problems. Through examining and assessing existing socio-economic, demographic and spatial conditions in the city as a one whole unit, a master plan sets the city's future trajectory and determines its character. As such a master plan sets the foundations for the very wellbeing of citizens.

In Umm al-Fahem the state of normality does not apply. For over thirty years, the local government has been engaged in a fierce battle and dispute with the planning authorities over the city's present, future and even past. Umm al-Fahem in 2009 did not have an updated approved master plan. The only approved master plan was the 1965 plan, produced by the Ministry of Interior when Umm al-Fahem was still a village under direct military rule. The plan was too generic. It was nothing more than a blue-lined circle drawn around the populated old historic part of the village and its satellite land, mostly orchards. Its spatial surface was designed for only 1200 dunums, which were not all designated for residential zones, but also green zones, where construction is illegal according to law. The plan was designed to fit the existing population, at the time numbering less than 10,000, with no reference to future population growth and future population needs, or to industrial and commercial zones.

The 1965 master plan instructions, or constitution as referred to by the city's strategic planner, were no more than two pages in total. These intervened primarily in trivial matters such as regulating the minimum height of buildings, the types of buildings allowed: that is commercial, residential, etc. Both the plan and its instruction were not flexible. They were restrictive. They were not designed to accommodate future population needs. "The plan did not include any details or information about allocating land for public buildings, roads, transportation, connection to sewage. No

regard what so ever for the foundations of planning ... If you go downtown, there is nothing there. It is one concrete lump. The [1965] map was nothing more than a blue line, within which people could just reproduce. Just like rabbits. It is a cage,” said the strategic planner (11 January 2011).

As the population multiplied rapidly due to a high birth rate, which at the time (1960s and 70s) reached an average of 5.7 members per household and sometimes even 10 or more, the planning conditions in Umm al-Fahem grew to become increasingly burdensome for both the residents and the local authority. Demand for housing increased while the residential zone remained constant and private land reserve became increasingly scarce. Individuals, especially young and future heads of family, who had land outside of the old centre, which was already densely populated and saturated, started to move outwards. Those who had land in the circle closest to the old town built their houses there, others moved to wherever their land was located.

The story of expansionism, however, is not as easy as it sounds. Those individuals could move out only if they owned private land and could afford to build a house. Owning land and having the money was not enough. The problem arose when their plots of land were in zones classified green according to the master plan. Green zones mean no building zone, which ultimately means that the construction of houses was done with no building permits and therefore under a threat of demolition by the planning authorities. *Yediot Ahronot* (22 November 1985) reported that in the 1980s about 40 per cent of residential buildings in the city were unauthorised.

## **The housing problem**

As housing is self-provided in the Palestinian sector and normatively one is expected to build his own house on land he or his father owns (mostly through inheritance), land for residential purposes was becoming increasingly scarce.<sup>228</sup> From the 1970s onwards, building a house became conditional for getting married as Qasim notes (1985). The norm got entrenched in society and very few brides would accept to share a house with their in-laws, as was the case, even norm, before. The pressure for land and housing became immense, especially in a society where hetero-marriages fulfilled an important aspect of life and provided the only socially acceptable structure where a man and woman could build a family and bring children into life. Moreover, up until recently (the last decade or so), rented accommodation for newly wedded couples was almost non-existent.

In the absence of public housing and public land available for Palestinians, and with a reality of dwindling land reserves, increasing demand for housing and the absence of an approved, updated master plan, the tension between private tenure of land and planning has become increasingly challenging. The tension is exacerbated by the fact that Umm al-Fahem has a distinctively young population, with 51.1 per cent below the age of 19 (Local Authorities in Israel 2005). People were and still are forced to build on their private land, regardless of zoning regulations. They have no choice but to violate the law by building in green zones. In many cases, especially in the old

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<sup>228</sup> Among the Palestinians it is generally the man who is expected to provide for housing, even if land inheritance is not always patriarchal. Therefore the body of the text refers to he rather than s/he when talking about housing and land.

town, land is used to the limit. Allocating land for parking or having a private garden were and still are the last and least of the residents' priorities, let alone giving some of their land up for public use. "What they [the residents of Umm-el-Fahem] think about is how close to the road their house could be," said the local authority professional in charge of roads and transport.

Abstractly and under normal conditions, the professional planning team acknowledges the regulatory potential of a master plan and the law according to which it operates. As put by the strategic planner, "the Planning and Building Law does not only take, it gives as well. It regulates transport. It regulates neighbourly relationships regarding duties and rights. It takes into consideration lighting, ventilation...It allocates land for public buildings, parks, etc." <sup>229</sup> The reality, however, as described above is that people are pushed to act selfishly. "If someone owns one or three dunums of land which he also shares with his brothers and sons, he knows that there is no land reserve. People fear for their future. So they hold tight onto it... This is why it is painful to confiscate land for public use," said the city's architect. <sup>230</sup> Residents know that the state is not providing for them and therefore they have to take care of their own interests. They know that the *Al-Shikunat* project is the exception not the rule. When the planning team presses citizens to allocate land for public use, their answer is negative. They ask the local authority to address the state to

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<sup>229</sup> One of the master plan objectives is to make sure that allocating land for public use, including open spaces. The plan regulates land use including allocating land for public use (see the Ministry of Interior website: [http://www.moin.gov.il/subjectdocuments/kolelaniot\\_yeshuvim/mkomiot\\_mitve\\_2013.pdf](http://www.moin.gov.il/subjectdocuments/kolelaniot_yeshuvim/mkomiot_mitve_2013.pdf)) [Hebrew].

<sup>230</sup> Interviewed 22 June 2009. According to the 1965 Planning and Building Law a local government is entitled to take up to 40 per cent of a piece of land in private ownership for public use.

provide for it instead. The residents are aware of the fact that the state owns land within the borders of the city, and therefore should be able to help, if it wishes so.<sup>231</sup>

In Jewish towns the issues of master plans and that of private-ownership over land and the challenges they pose for both planners and owners alike are resolved. Towns and other forms of settlements are built on state or JNF land. Moreover, the state, through the Ministry of Housing, the JNF and the Jewish Agency, takes care of the growing needs for housing. It studies, assesses both present and future needs and builds accordingly. In the Palestinian community, however, this is not the case. “Who builds housing for us?” asked the town planner, who brought the example of housing in the Jewish sector to contrast it with that in Umm-el-Fahem. “It is the private sector. We build. Not the Ministry of Housing. The organised neighbourhoods in Jewish towns are built by the Ministry of Housing. In our situation it is our society that assesses its needs privately. Not even the local authority. It is down to the individual unit. The citizen in our case just as he is in charge of meeting his basic needs of eating and drinking, etc... is also in charge of meeting his housing needs. This is only in the Arab sector here. In the Jewish sector it is the different ministries which are in charge of doing all this ... It is us who have to take care of ourselves.... the individuals to their own “ (ibid).

From an urban point of view, both the private tenure of land and planning policies have implications on the socio-spatial make-up of the city and the privatisation and

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<sup>231</sup> Land tenure in Umm al-Fahem is the following: private-ownership, state, JNF, mushaa and Islamic Waqf, that is land donated by people for public purposes. Residents however have limited or no access to state and JNF land. For more information, see the chapter on Israel’s colonial *nomos*.

atomisation of everyday life in the city. The available housing patterns mean that there is little population mobility, more kinship-based neighbourhoods, nothing to little choice of where to live, and therefore less heterogeneity. This also means fewer personal liberties, more social control and more expectation for reporting one's actions and whereabouts to his/her neighbours, especially if these are cousins, brothers and uncles. Here again, the very meaning of a city as a site of heterogeneity, diversity and assemblage of different individuals, a site of impersonal life and mobility to use Sennett's (2002) understanding of a city, is called into question.<sup>232</sup>

### **Absenting the master plan and the production of racialised exclusion: The Mei Ami dispute**

In 1972 the Ministry of Interior decided to allocate money for preparing an up-to-date master plan for the then village of Umm al-Fahem. The aim was that the new plan, if approved by the district committee as required by law, would replace the 1965 master plan. For this, Umm al-Fahem's local government chose architect and town planner Dov Chernobroda. Chernobroda produced a master plan according to scientific planning principles and within the requirements of the 1965 Planning and Building Law. In 1987, after 15 years of work, the plan was finally presented to the district committee. The district committee however declined the plan, despite the fact that Chernobroda took into consideration present and future population needs and more importantly that he planned according to the Zionist vision of separation between Jews and Palestinians.

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<sup>232</sup> On the meaning of the city as an urban site see chapter 3.

The grounds for the rejection were political, although not overtly articulated as such. The plan's sin, from the district committee's perspective, as told by Umm al-Fahem's planning department, was that it planned too big by including Al-Mua'alaqah into its jurisdiction. The committee insisted that Al-Mua'alaqah (see marked area in figure 23), be excluded from the map.



Figure 23: Al-Mua'alaqah. Source: *Google Maps* 2014

Al-Mua'alaqah for Umm-el-Fahem was not a separate entity but one of its neighbourhoods, hence the inclusion into its master plan. For the regional planning authorities however the situation was different. For them Al-Mua'alaqah, which as the map shows falls beyond road number 6535, is non-existent altogether. The district's position was unwavering. This non-existent status was also incorporated into Haifa's

District Master Plan for 2020, presented to the national planning council in January 2004. According to the district master plan, known as TAMAM 6, Al-Mua'alaqah appears as an unpopulated zone, which means that the already existing neighbourhood is illegal and therefore could sooner or later be demolished.

For the Fahmawis, the Al-Mua'alaqah case reveals more than it hides. For them, both the rejection of the proposed master plan and TAMAM 6 send a clear message that the planning authorities do not want the city of Umm al-Fahem to have any geographical continuity in close proximity to the Jewish settlement of Mei Ami.<sup>233</sup> Mei Ami is the closest Jewish locality to both Umm al-Fahem and Al-Mua'alaqah (figure 23). This conclusion is reinforced by a number of correlated issues, including zoning polices, building lines, purchase of land and future plans for road number 6535.

According to TAMAM 6 (see figure 24), the land adjacent to road number 6535, which belongs to residents of Umm al-Fahem in the form of private ownership, is designated as an open zone. This means that no construction is allowed. This is partially in line with Chernobroda's master plan which designated the depth of the building lines for both Umm al-Fahem and Mei Ami. For Umm al-Fahem, the line where no construction whatsoever is allowed was 80 metres inwards towards Umm al-Fahem along 6535. The building line for Mei Ami was only 5 metres inwards towards the settlement. Moreover, the state had over the years managed to buy Umm

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<sup>233</sup> The word settlement here does not imply the illegal settlement built in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of 1967.



al-Fahem's privately owned land which was adjacent to the road in exchange for land it offered inside the city. For Fahmawis who sold their land to the state this represented a lucrative and seductive exchange of land, given that land adjacent to the road would have been of no use to them because of zoning policies.

Umm al-Fahem's planning department revealed that road number 6535 was planned to be the artificial borderline separating the two communities (Umm al-Fahem and Mei Ami). The state plans, as appeared in the national road map, TAMA 3, is to turn it into a dual carriageway.<sup>234</sup> For the people of Umm al-Fahem this was a message of separation by geographical means.

#### **Detailed plans: planning in fragments, planning in retrospect**

As expected, the planning conditions were made more difficult by the absence of an approved master plan. Locals started to feel the squeeze. For them this was an existential threat. They were left with the choice of either put getting married off, potentially indefinitely, or take a chance by building on land not designated for residential purposes. As discussed above, getting married is an important event, if not the most important event for Fahmawis. Therefore, Fahmawis chose not to wait. They were desperate. But they soon were faced with the spectre of demolition, especially those whose land was close to the main road of Wadi Ara, road number 65.

In Ein Ibraheem for example, a neighbourhood to the west of Wadi Ara, every time locals put two stones together, they got demolished. So people got organised and

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<sup>234</sup> TAMA in Hebrew stands for National Master Plan.

thought that the city's town planner, Dov Chernoboroda at the time, might have the answer for their distressing situation. They addressed him and told him they wanted to build houses for their sons so that they could get married. Chernoboroda in his turn came up with the idea of detailed plans as an answer to the distressing and stressful planning conditions. According to the law a detailed plan, which is a fragment of a master plan, can issue building permits. For Ein Ibraheem he managed to produce a detailed plan called E'in nun 129, which was retrospectively approved by the district committee. This meant that the houses, which were built with no initial building permit, were no longer under the threat of demolition. The detailed plans he prepared were fragments of his two-decades worth of work master plan.

Retrospective planning, however, does not always work. It entails a lengthy perplexing process, and often results in very little success. Through detailed plans, the local authority tries to retrospectively change zoning and use of land, which involves addressing not only the district committee but the national planning council as well. The detailed plan for the already populated Iskandar neighbourhood, for example, has been awaiting approval for 19 years (from 1990 to 2009 when the fieldwork was underway). Iskandar has been built on land defined as a green zone by the 1965 master plan. If and by the time the plan gets approved, the spatial reality would not be the same and perhaps new buildings would be built. For the time being people are still waiting in suspension.

From the city's professional planning perspective, planning in a constantly changing spatial reality poses an immense pressure. "Planning on existing conditions is the most challenging thing in planning...the feeling of planning for a house as it is being built..." is very disempowering as the city's architect put it (22 June 2009). The

district committee expects the detailed plans to be all done according to law, without taking the existing planning and housing conditions into account. They expect the already existing houses, which were built with no building permission, to meet all the required planning regulations, pertaining to allocating land for public use, connection to the sewage grid, etc. Therefore, both the local authority planning team and the local citizen bear the brunt of the absence of approved master plans and the delay in approving detailed plans. This frustrating, vicious circle kind of planning entanglement perpetuates the state of entropy and leaves both the city's planning team and the residents in a kind of permanent state of suspension.



authorities plan for the city to expand east and south of road number 65, towards the West Bank. Umm al-Fahem plans to take advantage of the economic potential of road number 65, and the planning authorities plan for an open urban zone. Through both regional and national master plans, the planning authorities plan for arrested development.


Through zoning policies, mostly designating potential areas for development as green open zones, including forests and regional parks, the planning authorities seek to limit development, curb the expansion of the city and the fulfilment of its economic potential. Haifa's regional plan TAMAM 6, produced in January 2004, sums up the plans for Umm al-Fahem. Taking no regard whatsoever of the city's wishes and al-Roha agreement of understanding made with the government of Israel over the possibility of expanding the city's borders towards north west of road number 65, TAMAM 6 has designated most of the area a green zone. The different shades of the colour green in the map (figure 24) occupy large swathes of land within Umm al-Fahem's existing and suggested borders and therefore generate much of the dispute with Haifa's district planning committee. The dispute is presented in the official *Objection Document to the Regional Master Plan, TAMAM 6* (2004) which Umm al-Fahem's local government has presented to the national council for planning in April 2004, three months after TAMAM 6 was produced.<sup>236</sup>

In December 2000 the state of Israel, represented by the Ministry of Interior, signed

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<sup>236</sup> According to the Planning and Building Law, the national council for planning is the highest body in the planning system, which amongst its functions is approving regional master plans. For more information about the council see Planning Authorities: Instructions and Procedures, available at the Ministry of Interior website: <http://www.moin.gov.il/Publications/Mafamim2702.pdf> [Hebrew].

the Al-Roha agreement of understanding with the public committee for the defence of Al-Roha lands and the Arab local governments in Wadi Ara, represented by Umm al-Fahem and Kufur Qari.<sup>237</sup> The agreement came after violent clashes between state armed forces and residents of Umm al-Fahem erupted in 1998 over Al-Roha lands. The violence was instigated by the military's chief of staff decision to declare land that belonged to Fahmawi families a fire zone.<sup>238</sup>

For Umm-el-Fahem and its residents, Al-Roha lands provide the potential for their future development. Their vision is to open up towards the area, which covers about 30 per cent of the city's jurisdiction. Haifa's district master plan, however and in complete contradiction to the city's wishes, designated the area north of road number 65, except for Ein Ibraheem (which appears in the colour orange), as a protected open/agricultural zone.<sup>239</sup> The colour as marked on the map is light green-blue with a black outline <sup>240</sup> In the official *Objection Document* to TAMAM 6 (2004), Umm al-Fahem stated that by designating the land as a protected open/agricultural zone, the district planning committee acted against the owners' wishes. It "brings the city's development to stagnation," stated the document (Umm al-Fahem's Local

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<sup>237</sup> Al-Roha covers an area of 42,000 dunums, which are privately owned by Palestinian families from Wadi Ara who use it for grazing and growing olives.

<sup>238</sup> The confiscation resulted in a series of violent clashes between the state and the local population. The secondary school of Umm-el-Fahem, which is located in a relative proximity to the Wadi Ara road, was targeted in the clashes. Residents say that it turned into a battlefield and an emergency unit. Many students were injured in the clashes and some people lost their eyes from rubber bullets fired at them.

<sup>239</sup> Figure 11 does not show the rest of Al-Roha lands that falls beyond its borders, i.e. north of the blue-coloured line. The line is the border between Haifa district and northern district.

<sup>240</sup> This is the colour as defined by the master plan's instruction (2013: 20). For more details on the permitted use of land for protected open/agriculture zone, please see, Israel Land Administration: <http://www.mmi.gov.il/IturTobotData/tmm/haifa/tmm6.pd> p20 [Hebrew].

Government 2004: 21). It, therefore, demanded land usage is changed to a mixture of land uses: to include rural, rural-urban development as well as an open agricultural zone (ibid: 20).


Umm al-Fahem's local government cites a number of reasons that underpin their request to change zoning. These are the following: The area covers a continuous expanse of land, covering 5000 dunums, which constitutes about 20 per cent of Umm al-Fahem's jurisdiction. The land connects together the city's three neighbourhoods, which are north of road number 65: Ein Ibraheem, Ein Al-Zatunih, and Li-byaer.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, 70 per cent of the land is in private ownership and the local residents have already started to build houses there. From a developmental and planning point of view, the land has many advantageous properties. Compared to the mountainous terrain of the city, the land does not have steep slopes and has got low environmental sensitivity. This makes it suitable for urban development, with relatively little effect on the environment, especially on the quality of subterranean waters.<sup>242</sup> It is also surrounded by an already existing urban infrastructure, including roads, electricity, water, sewage, and telecommunication.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Apart from Ein Ibraheem, the other two neighbourhoods are non-existent according to the plan. Ein El-Zatunih for example, appears as a park zone. In the *Objection Document* (2004), the local government demanded that this status change to rural development zone, which will prevent the demolition of the neighbourhood (for more information see, Umm al-Fahem's Local Government: 23 [Hebrew]).

<sup>242</sup> The city's topography poses a challenge for getting building permits. The mountainous terrain makes it hard to meet all the requirements pertaining to connection to roads, electricity, water, sewage etc.

<sup>243</sup> The consultant for environmental issues who was part of the appointed committee, which the Ministry of Interior put together to prepare a conceptual master plan for the city in early 2000s, has recommended the area be designated for commerce, trade and industries (see ibid: 13).

The light green-blue colour is only one of the different shades of green. The map designates a relatively large area of land as a metropolitan park. This is marked by the dark green colour with blue dots: . The park falls within the existing and proposed city's borders and covers thousands of dunums of land that are in private ownership. The local authority argues that not only does the park impinge on property rights, but zoning the area as such blocks the city's present and future development. It therefore suggests that the metropolitan park be changed to accommodate future residential neighbourhoods. The local authority also reminded the district committee that according to the national master plan for forests and afforestation (TAMA 22), about 5000 dunums within the city's borders have already been designated as forest zones.<sup>244</sup> "The question that begs itself, is there a need for designating extra thousands of dunums for a regional park within the city's borders? Why not designate the already existing forest zones, which are within the city's borders, as a regional park? These questions need to be answered by the planning team," stated the *Objection Document* (2004: 22-23).<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> The local government is also objecting to the designation of privately owned land according to TAMA 22 and TAMAM6 as forest reserve.

<sup>245</sup> There are about 23,000 dunums of land within Umm al-Fahem's jurisdiction. So the 5000 dunums constitute a big portion of the city's borders.



Hotel city: “work in Tel Aviv and come back to sleep at home”<sup>246</sup>



Figure 25: Cool lunch boxes: two workers carrying their cool lunch boxes returning to the city after work (out of the city)

“How could it be a city when the majority of its working men have to leave the city to find work?!” has often been the question posed back to me by field interviewees when asked whether Umm al-Fahem is a city. The city’s evening hours are living evidence that Umm al-Fahem is truly a commuters’ dormitory city. The scene of workers

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<sup>246</sup> This is a quote from an interview with the city’s architect on 22 June 2009, Umm al-Fahem.

carrying their cool lunch boxes (figure 25) either walking in the streets, making their way home, or just getting off buses and vehicles is inescapable in the city at that time of the day. Lack of industrial and commercial zones were also often cited as evidence for the nominal status of their city and the absence of work opportunities in it.

Both the local government and the residents recognise that in order for a city to function it has to have a viable economic base. They are also aware of the huge potential for development along the busy road of Wadi Ara (figure 26), road number 65. Demanding that the district planning committee zone the area for commerce was therefore inevitable. Working professionally within the planning regulations and in the hope of getting the approval of the planning authorities, the local government prepared a detailed plan for a service road, and a commercial zone of 40,000 squared metres, in the area adjacent to road number 65. The plan was put together according to modern planning standards, sought also to ease the busy traffic in road number 65, and respond to environmental concerns.



Figure 26: Wadi Ara: busy road

From the local government's point of view, having a commercial zone within its borders means increasing its income through council tax charges and providing job opportunities for residents. This is particularly important as the main available income to the city is government budget which is not enough to meet the city's needs. The income generated from other sources, such as council tax, is problematic. This is due to the low socio-economic conditions, which mean that households are in council tax arrears and many of them are exempt altogether. The arrears are so bad that the local authority had to put a huge poster on the main entrance to the city, reminding people to pay their taxes. It even equates paying their debts to patriotism and loyalty (figure 27 below).

Council tax for non-residential properties is higher in value and generates relatively big revenues for the local authority. Therefore, commercial and industrial zones, together with civil service offices constitute some of the main demands which the city

presents to the state and its planning authorities. Not only do they provide the city with work opportunities but they also contribute to its economic development and to lifting it out of its hotel status.




Figure 27: Belonging and patriotism= paying tax, let's pay our debt to the local government

Haifa's district committee, however, declined the plan. Its justification was that designating the stretch of land along the road as commercial was against national master plans, particularly the integrated national master plan for construction, development and preservation, known as TAMA 35, and the national map for roads, TAMA 3.<sup>247</sup> According to TAMA 35, the requested area is designated a green zone.

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<sup>247</sup> TAMA 35 was approved by a government decision in 2005.



The national master plan for roads indicates that the building line for that strip of land is 100 metres. TAMAM 6 reinforced the national plans by designating the area as an open urban zone, marked by the colour green: .<sup>248</sup> For Fahmawis, this sends a message of blockage and limitation on racialised grounds. It also sends a message of entrenching the state of dependency on Jewish towns and the national government. Their conclusion is reinforced by the existing reality in Jewish localities, where commercial zones are allowed in almost zero distance from road number 65 (see figure 28).

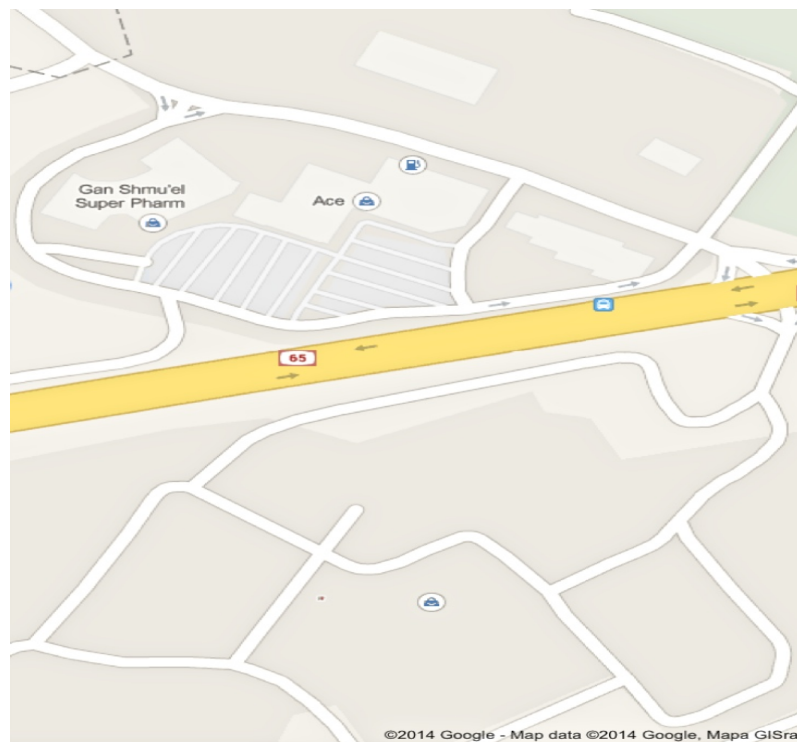


Figure 28: Gan Shmuel. Source: Google Maps 2014

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<sup>248</sup> This is the description of the colour as it appears in the master plan's instruction (2013:22). For further details on permitted land use see Israel Land Administration website: <http://www.mmi.gov.il/IturTobotData/tmm/haifa/tmm6.pdf> [Hebrew].

Gan Shmuel commercial zone (figure 28), 22.8 km southwest of Umm al-Fahem, is a case in point.<sup>249</sup> It is cited as a successful example of the economic benefits generated from materialising the potential of a main road, and an evidence of allowed development in Jewish areas alone. The commercial zone includes a big McDonalds, an Ace (American hardware store), a super pharm, and a number of other Israeli chain stores and coffee shops. Gan Shmuel is crowded with Palestinians from Wadi Ara who use the commercial area for shopping and recreational purposes. “80 per cent of Wadi Ara [the Arabs] spend their time there. I go there. I have got no choice. I go there for shopping. I take the kids there for leisure,” said the city’s architect (22 June 2009).

The question that begs itself is, “why is it that Gan Shmuel [a kibbutz with a population of 839 (CBS 2011)] is allowed to have a commercial zone adjacent to the road...and Umm al-Fahem, as a central city in Wadi Ara, is not,” asked the architect. Majiddo, which is less than 10 km northeast of Umm al-Fahem, is another case in point. They are planning for “a terrifying commercial zone,” said the architect. The plan is for “bi-polar commercial zones, so that Umm al-Fahem is sandwiched in between them...so that it remains a hotel: we work in Tel Aviv and come back to sleep at home,” said the architect (ibid).

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<sup>249</sup> Distance worked out through Google maps.

A future railway line, according to the national master plan for railways TAMA 23, is projected to pass across road number 65. The district committee sees this as another factor for designating the area a green zone. Umm al-Fahem's suggestion to the committee is to use the planned railway line to the benefit of the city, not the opposite. It suggested a stop in Umm al-Fahem, which would be linked to the commercial zone. This would also be to the benefits of the residents of Wadi Ara, who currently have to travel to the Jewish town of Binyameenah (about 30 km west) to be able to use to the train.

### **But life continues...**

Fahmawis, defying the planning authorities' restrictions, went ahead with their plans. They took a chance. They built about 35 retail shops along the road, including bakeries, supermarkets, printing services, etc. The commercial zone has started to pick up economically and is already employing dozens of workers from the city. But the conditions in terms of infrastructure are poor and the properties are built cheaply. Property owners are keen to invest in building modern, even luxurious properties but they are aware of the planning regulations. They know that their properties are unauthorised and therefore are against the law. Many of them have already received demolition orders and some have already been demolished, as was the case with the fruit and vegetable store (cited at the beginning of the chapter). Therefore, the market looks disorganised, cheap and messy.

The story with the planning authorities and the resulting disorder in the streets is repeated again. The authorities do not allow development on one hand, and criminalise people who build on the other, all in the name of law. The locals blame

the authorities for their chaotic, precarious condition. They are also aware that the authorities interfere and choose to implement the Planning and Building Law more rigorously when Jewish interests are at stake. For example, the demolition orders are more likely to take place when buildings and structures are close to areas considered sensitive to the Jewish public, such as road number 65. However, and despite all of this, the message Fahmawis send is also one of resilience and defiance (figure 29 below). They insist on building, developing and materialising their right to development. They protest against reducing and perpetuating their city to what they call a hotel city or a refugee camp.



Figure 29: Rebuilding the fruit and vegetables store which was demolished in the market area



## Conclusion

The chapter has discussed how Israel's very centralised, interventionist, hierarchised and comprehensive planning system combines with its racialised and Manichaean land system to simultaneously shape the very materiality of the city of Umm al-Fahem and its everyday life, thus questioning the very meaning and functionality of the city. Through discussing local and regional master plans the chapter demonstrated how the system is employed to achieve political ends, not the wellbeing of all citizens. Operating within the confines of a racialised and Manichaean *nomos*, this system is employed as a powerful technology of control and governmentality that works towards producing suspended, docile, socially controlled and privatised Palestinian citizens and spaces that are in a perpetual state of dependency and arrested development, or in other words in a state of urbicide.

To illustrate the arguments, the chapter started by sharing excerpts from an interview with a local resident whose fruit and vegetable store got demolished while conducting the ethnographic fieldwork. His story captures the essence of living in suspension, the deliberate policies of economic de-development in the name of keeping law and order, and the insistence of Fahamwis on their right to economic development. The chapter then moved to describe the *Al-Shikunat* housing project in the city. The project is discussed in the context of what both the local government and the citizens are capable of achieving when the state and its planning authorities are collaborative. Not only are the *Al-Shikunat* built on state land but also detailed plans prepared by the local government are approved. The *Al-Shikunat* are therefore planned with the

wellbeing of the citizen being the prime priority. The chapter then moved to discuss how the housing project is the exception, not the norm. The prevailing planning and housing reality is one of nightmare, complexities and (non)-planning. The city's professional planning team is faced with the challenge of planning under what often feel like irreconcilable (post)colonial conditions.

The chapter discussed how the absence of an approved up-to-date master plan in the city, the existence of an out-dated master plan from 1965, dwindling private land resources and increasing demand for land for housing in a distinctively young city with more than 50 per cent of the population below the age of 19, has resulted in entropy, crowdedness, illegal and unauthorised buildings, a housing problem, as well as increasing social control. These problems are exacerbated by the withdrawal of the state on the one hand, and the persistently politicised and racialised employment of planning policies, on the other. The chapter discussed how, against these conditions, citizens not only are forced to take a chance and live in suspension by building with no authorisation, but they are also encouraged to act selfishly. Their priority is not to give up some of their precious land for public use, but to secure housing for themselves, even if this means risking demolition and criminalisation.

The chapter also discussed the implications which the private tenure of land, based on inheritance, and the self-provision of housing have on everyday life, the social make-up of society and the very meaning of the urban experience. It discussed how heterogeneity, being impersonal, or choosing freely where to live in the city are badly affected, even non-existent.

The chapter then moved to discuss the grounds for declining a master plan that was prepared by the local government. It reached the conclusion that keeping the Jewish and Palestinian communities apart, and preventing Umm al-Fahem's geographical continuity is what stands at the heart of the regional planning committee decision. Mei Ami and Al-Mua'alaqah cases were used to illustrate the conclusion. It also discussed the exacerbated housing problem and the partial planning remedy that the local government found for it.

Planning for arrested racialised development and Umm al-Fahem's resistance to these plans by insisting on getting out of the situation where the city is merely a hotel that serves the rudimentary functions of eating, drinking and reproducing, was the final subject discussed in the chapter. Through visiting Haifa's regional master plan, TAMAM 6, in relation to Umm al-Fahem and the subsequent objection to the plan by the city's planning team, the chapter discussed how TAMAM 6 and its zoning policies curb the city's economic development and expansionism. Drawing on Gan Shmuel commercial zone that is in zero distance from the main road of 65, the chapter illustrated how TAMAM 6 and the regional planning committee are informed by racialised considerations that work to economically empower the Jewish sector, while de-developing that of Umm al-Fahem. Umm al-Fahem prepared plans for a commercial zone in the city adjacent to road 65 but these were declined on planning and zoning grounds, one of which being in almost zero distance from the road. The chapter discussed how, for Umm al-Fahem, TAMAM 6 meant perpetuating the nominal status of their city and depriving them of the right to development.

Umm al-Fahem's resistance to these urbicidal policies and insistence on living with hope is written in the opening pages to the TAMAM 6 *Objection Document*, prepared

by Umm al-Fahem's local government and submitted to the national council for planning. The *Objection Document* (2004: 2) states: "[t]he residents of the city perceive the proposed TAMAM 6, as both a punishment and a catastrophe brought upon them by the central government. We, however, believe that the catastrophic and punitive character of the plan could be transformed into hope, an act of conciliation and a positive move which the central government could bring upon the welfare of the city's residents."

While this chapter discussed direct interventionist technologies of control and governmentality deployed by the planning and land system, the next chapter takes up the subject of indirect forms of control, or what it calls control from within, that is the incorporation of Fahmawis into their own subjugation and the attempts to reduce them to their faith.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Control from within: religious identities, biopolitical hegemony and the socio-spatial and political Islamisation of Umm al-Fahem**

In 1989, the Islamic Movement won the local elections in a landslide victory.<sup>250</sup> Its victory inflicted a massive and enduring defeat on the principal rival incumbent communist leadership, who by then had been in office for over 10 years. Throughout the last 25 years since the Movement first took office it has been repeatedly winning the local democratic elections, thus establishing an unequivocal hegemony in the city. As expected, the shift in local politics has been accompanied by a shift in the city's socio-spatial and cultural landscape. Therefore, the year 1989 ushered in a new era and new conjuncture in the history of Umm al-Fahem. Some locals refer to it as the cultural turn in the everyday life of the city.

Perhaps one of the most important and defining changes of this era (1989 onwards) has been the relationship between the state and Umm al-Fahem's local government and vice versa. The animosity towards the communist-led local government, manifested primarily but not solely in inadequate budgeting, was replaced by a new level of sponsorship and endorsement to the newly elected Islamic Movement. Meanwhile, the confrontational, vocal and challenging relationship that the predecessor local government had towards the state was replaced with pragmatism and localism. Being a vocal voice against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the national and political oppression of Palestinians and the demand for equal

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<sup>250</sup> The chapter uses the Islamic Movement and the Movement interchangeably.

rights and a politically just solution to the conflict were not the Movement's top priorities, at least not in its beginnings. In fact, in the run-up to the 1989 elections anti-communism and raising the banner of 'Islam is the solution' was what defined the Movement's political campaign.

The Movement chose to concentrate on and prioritise local, social, bodily and everyday matters in the life of the city and its residents. Improving the ailing and dysfunctional urban infrastructure, focusing on education, health, rehabilitation of drug addicts, the building of healthy functioning family units, establishing an economic base, and a general commitment to improving residents' wellbeing were its major priorities. It also sought to Islamise the socio-spatiality of the city by introducing a new social, moral and normative order that worked towards promoting religiosity, reviving the Islamic identity, changing residents' daily practices and producing new subjectivities: the Muslim man and new society.<sup>251</sup> Therefore, its slogan 'Islam is the solution' was presented as the panacea for all the mundane, spiritual and moral ills of society.

Against this brief background, this chapter is concerned with deconstructing the workings of governmentality as manifested in Umm al-Fahem's contemporary socio-spatial, cultural and political order, particularly in the immediate years around 1989.

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<sup>251</sup> Man in this context applies to either sex. It means a human being. The building of healthy, happy and functioning nuclear families is part of building a healthy society. For more information on this see [www.sanad-osra.com/](http://www.sanad-osra.com/) [Arabic]. Sanad in Arabic is support. The webpage states clearly that its vision is to build and develop a society according to Islamic Shariah and its mission is to educate families to take on the task of building a society according to Islamic Shariah in order to achieve cohesive and happy families. Offering support to mothers and young women through counselling and educational days and conferences is amongst its missions.

The chapter identifies these years as defining times in the city's history. Governmentality, here, is deployed in relation to two different but interconnected contexts. First, how the state sought to incorporate Fahmawis into their own subjugation through employing a mixture of technologies and by using the democratic structure of local elections, in what the chapter refers to as control from within.

The second is in relation to the way the Islamic Movement sought to direct Fahmawis' conduct and render them governable. Two concepts are mobilised here to illustrate and discuss the Movement's governmentality. These are Gramsci's hegemony and Foucault's biopolitics. Both hegemony and biopolitics, in this context, are entangled together, with one reinforcing and legitimising the other. By hegemony I mean ruling by (active) popular consent of the local population.<sup>252</sup> I describe the process and the mechanisms through which the Movement won the trust and support of the majority of Fahmwais, thus establishing and sustaining its dominance in the city. The concept also accounts for how the Movement established itself as the voice of authority in moral and social affairs.

Foucault's biopolitics as a practice and a technology of intervention that seeks to govern populations and maintain control in the name of higher morality and objectives is particularly relevant to understanding the Islamic Movement's regulatory

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<sup>252</sup> Although the concept of hegemony occupies a pivotal role in Gramsci's analysis of social, cultural and political processes, he does not always employ it consistently. As noted by Anderson (1976) the concept underwent numerous mutations throughout his writing. In the *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci refers to hegemony as "the spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 2001: 145). In a different context he brackets hegemony as the active consent (ibid: 504).

practices in the city and the way it governed its residents.<sup>253</sup> Moreover, the concept proves insightful as the Movement's mode of government has been to a large extent concerned with life and inscribed in the body with special regard to biological and physical features. Whether it was public hygiene and public health campaigns, the commitment to creating a better society, or the dedication to work on the female body in both its singularity and collectivity, these were all biopolitical interventionist strategies par excellence that the Movement followed and which helped it to establish its hegemony in the city.

The chapter argues that in a colonial context where the colonised are seen as a problem and a challenge that needs to be contained, by resorting to this mode of governmentality which is characterised by indirect soft forms of control, what Foucault (1979: 211) calls "flexible methods of control," the state guarantees efficiency, maintains a façade of democratic rule and satisfies the colonised right to self-government within the existing democratic structures. This mode of control is more viable and more economical. It, in fact, goes hand in hand with the thoughtful reflection by Joseph Servan, the French General who served as a Minister of War during the French Revolution, who wrote: "[a] stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more stronger by the chain of

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<sup>253</sup> This understanding of biopolitics draws on a number of sources; primarily Foucault's direct writings and analysis of the concepts of biopolitics and biopower as appears in *History of Sexuality: an Introduction* (1990) and *Society Must be Defended, and Security, Territory and Population* (2003). In the history of sexuality (1990), Foucault defines biopower as "the diverse techniques for achieving subjugation of bodies and the control of populations..." The work of other key theoreticians of Foucault and his concepts of biopolitics and biopower has also contributed to the formulation of the concept. These include Thomas Lemke's (2011) *Biopolitics*, David Macey's (2009) article 'Rethinking Biopolitics: Race and Power in the Wake of Foucault,' and Paul Rabinow's and Nikolas Rose's (2006) article Thoughts on the Concept of Biopower Today.



their own ideas” (quoted in Foucault 1979: 102-3).

The chapter demonstrates how this form of control was concretely materialised through crippling the existing communist-led local government and other progressive forces to facilitate the way for the rise of the Islamic Movement to power. It discusses how slow violence, in the shape of under-budgeting aimed at affecting the very materiality of the city, along with using water and sewage as political weapons, were some of the main tangible and operative technologies at the hand of the state to achieve this objective. The chapter’s overall aim is to demonstrate that weakening the communist local government which was successful at mobilising nationalist feelings in the 1970s and 1980s and therefore perceived as potentially threatening, through reducing subjects to their faith by encouraging religious identities was the most suitable mode of governmentality at that time. It also puts forward the argument that a tamed biopolitical hegemonic Islamic Movement, concerned with encouraging religious identities, social and moral conservatism and which organically possesses strong disciplinary and regulatory capabilities and which operates within the tolerable boundaries of law and order becomes invaluable to the production of a docile, self-regulating city and citizens consumed with social conformism. Moreover, religious identities are congruous with the state’s fragmenting strategy of divide and rule.

The chapter is divided into four main sections which engage in critical reading of the situation on the ground before and after the rise of the Islamic Movement to power. The first section starts by disentangling the relationship between the urban and the political, through discussing the very materiality of the city and the politics of water and sewage which brought the local communist-led government to defeat and helped the Movement rise to power. It illustrates how the former was incapacitated by under-

budgeting and persisting budget deficiency that rendered it incompetent with poor performance in delivering urban services.

The second section discusses in more details the processes and mechanisms through which the Movement established and sustained its biopolitical hegemony and how within a short period of time of coming to power had managed to radically transform the city's urban landscape. It focuses primarily on the domains of urban regeneration, health and education, the Islamisation of the socio-spatiality of the city and the Movement's high competency and performance in managing the city's mundane and everyday affairs. It also touches on the Movement's economic mechanism that enhanced both its performance and biopolitical hegemonic presence.<sup>254</sup> A key thread that runs through this section is the Movement's ability to tightly entangle ideology with practice through presenting religion as the panacea for all the ills in society, not only rhetorically but materially as well.

The third section takes up the subject of the state and its relationship to the Islamic Movement. It illustrates how the latter was endorsed and financially supported by the former. This new level of sponsorship contributed to the Movement's performance and was another factor that helped establish its hegemony. It then moves to discuss how the material support was part of a larger plan to encourage religious identities that worked to weaken the popularity of the communists and other left forces. To illustrate the argument, it draws on statements made by state officials as reflected in

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<sup>254</sup> Possessing an independent economic base, through *Zakat* and alms, and offering active support for the creation of a financially established class, such as by way of providing public land to establish businesses, was another mechanism that helped establish the Movement's hegemony. It is however beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate on this mechanism.

two Israeli newspapers: *Haaretz* and *Yediot Ahronot*, as well as official statistics regarding state budgets received by the local government.

The fourth section discusses the issue of control from within. It discusses how the Islamic Movement used its biopolitical hegemonic power to promote social conservatism in ways that favoured what it perceived as religious ways of life over existing practices and culture. It illustrates how through the Islamic wedding phenomenon and the example of the dismissal of a secondary school teacher, the Movement sought to promote social conformism and dismiss existing social practices by introducing new ones.

Moreover, the section discusses the female body and how it became a site and signifier of political change. It deconstructs the politics of the veil and how the veiling campaign was mobilised to create a new body and a new society. This subsection illustrates how the flip side of the campaign was political and social. The veil became not only a religious identity marker but worked as a political screening mechanism for those who were associated with the Movement and those who were not. It also discusses how the veil interfered in the public and everyday spatialisation of the body.

As far as literature and methodology are concerned, the chapter draws mostly on primary material and employs discourse and historical analysis to illustrate the arguments. To discuss the city's conditions under communist government, the chapter draws mostly on *Al-Itihad* newspaper and *Al-Ghad* magazine, both associated with the Communist Party. The newspaper of *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih*, the Islamic Movement's mouthpiece, provides a documented history on the fundamental changes in the city's history after 1989, especially in regard to the Movement's successful

record in what they called the urban renaissance that took place during the Movement's very early years in office. Both *Haaretz* newspaper and *Yediot Ahronot* are used in the section on the state and the Movement. Last but not least, the rich and fascinating material gathered throughout the fieldwork informs the essence of this chapter. In fact, the chapter reflects field interviewees' first-hand experiences of the socio-political and spatial changes in their city.

### **Years of siege: the politics of shit, the politics of water**

Hashim Mahameed, Umm al-Fahem's mayor before 1989, describes his years in office as ones of siege and isolation.<sup>255</sup> Throughout his tenure, the local government suffered from severe budget deficiency that shackled its development and left it dysfunctional and incapable of performing its duties towards its residents. Basic services could hardly be delivered with shortages in almost every sphere of public urban life. In 1985, for example, the city of 22,000 (Statistical Abstract 2008: 129) with almost half of its population under the age of 19 had thirteen schools in total, eleven of which were primary schools, one secondary school, and one for special needs. One-third of primary schools' classrooms, 80 out of 240, were rented in squalid conditions; lacking health and safety standards, and some even with no doors, windows, toilets, playgrounds, or even ceilings (*Al-Ghad* 1985; Nevo 1985).

In 1987 the local government could not pay its employees their salaries for months on end. This prompted the secondary school, which had 1020 students and 67 teachers,

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<sup>255</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 13 August 2009.

to go on strike.<sup>256</sup> Within the space of four years the school had a total of about 225 days in strike, reaching the equivalent of more than one academic year. Both students and teachers believed their school was the victim of a deliberate policy of financial strangulation and siege employed against the city (*Al-Ghad* April 1987).<sup>257</sup> To translate words into figures, the local government budget for that year was 4,947,499 Israeli Shekels (Central Bureau of Statistics 1990: 69-70), and its deficit was 4,000,000 Israeli Shekels.

The provision of sports facilities was almost nil. Playing basketball, tennis or going swimming in the city was all but a dream for the local residents.<sup>258</sup> Football was the only sport they could play. The city's football team was heading the list of the national B League and yet providing an adequate space for them to play and train became increasingly difficult to maintain. The city's only football grounds had to be shut down for health and safety reasons. This meant that every time the team wanted to train it had to travel 80km to get to a Palestinian locality that had the appropriate facilities (ibid).

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<sup>256</sup> In Israel, administration of secondary schools falls under local governments responsibility.

<sup>257</sup> See Qasim, G. (1987) 'Umm al-Fahem's High School: a Victim of a Policy of Financial Strangulation and Siege against the City of Umm al-Fahem', *Al-Ghad*, April 1987 [Arabic]. Also, in chapter 6 on planning, I discussed how government budgets provide the main income for Palestinian localities.

<sup>258</sup> See interview with Mahameed in Nevo, A. (1985) 'His Honour, The Mayor', *Yediot Ahronot*, 22 November [Hebrew]. In the interview Mahameed said: "we have got no sewage pipes. Therefore, there are severe diseases which do not exist in other city. There is a shortage of 80 classrooms. The majority of classrooms have got no doors, no windows, and without sanitation. There is no cultural club, not even one public park or basketball court. Umm al-Fahem's football team is heading the list, in B League, yet they travel to Kufur Qasim to get training. What am I asking for? I have not asked for either a swimming pool nor a tennis court."

In regards to neutral cultural centres, the ‘student house’ was the only one. The facility however had hardly the capacity to serve one-fifth of the students. Although the city in the 1970s and 1980s was buzzing with cultural activities, and had two functioning cinemas, these were mostly partisan or religious.<sup>259</sup> The Communist Party club and that of *Abnaa el-Balad* (Sons of the land) were the main centres offering non-religious cultural activities.<sup>260</sup> Their activities included youth camps, poetry evenings, art exhibitions, film screenings (mostly documentaries), theatrical sketches, musical events, etc. In many occasions school playgrounds used to provide the space for these activities.

Urban hygiene, however, was probably the most visibly dysfunctional sphere of all public services. Not only were the streets narrow, potholed and with piles of uncollected rubbish, but they were also conduits for sewage. For many years the local government had plans to fit sewers, but lacked adequate budget to execute them. The (state) planning authorities were not collaborative either, and were part of the problem rather than the solution. In 1987, the city’s budget for development was U.S. \$100,000, when 60 million dollars were needed to tackle the city’s rough terrain of hilly topography and harsh socio-economic conditions (*Al-Ghad* March 1987).<sup>261</sup> It is no surprise therefore that flowing sewage and dirty streets became recurring motifs in many articles written on the city’s distressing conditions before 1989. As might be expected, poor public hygiene made the city vulnerable to diseases. In November

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<sup>259</sup> Umm al-Fahem had two privately run cinemas. One of them was called the ‘Red Cinema’ and used to show Bollywood films, amongst other things. It closed down in the early 1980s. The other cinema got burned down in late 1970s.

<sup>260</sup> See the section on *Al-Hadaf* cultural empire in chapter 5: historical sociology.

<sup>261</sup> See ‘Umm al-Fahem Challenges Water-Starvation,’ *Al-Ghad*, March 1987. [Arabic]

1985, Mahameed told *Yediot Ahronot* that because of the absence of sewerage, the city suffered from severe diseases that were not found in other cities (Nevo 1985).

Living in a city with a basic public hygiene system was a fantasy for Fahmawis. In an article entitled ‘He Has Got a Dream,’ which appeared in *Yediot Ahronot* on the 25 June 1987, a day after half a million of Palestinians in Israel went on strike against the state’s discriminatory policies, Mahameed said: “my dream focuses on the sewage of Umm al-Fahem. It makes me angry that my child goes to school... and on his way he has to step on sewage. As long as refuse is not flowing in sewers, as in Afula, I will not keep silent” (*Yediot Ahronot* 25 June 1987).<sup>262</sup>

The gravity of the situation, in particular the flowing sewage in the streets and alleyways of the city was perhaps best reflected in the political sphere. Not only did it represent a living embodiment of persistent state negligence and dire socio-economic conditions, but it also proved influential, if not a leading force, in shifting the political

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<sup>262</sup> Comparison with the neighbouring Jewish city of Afula, which had almost the same size of population was inevitable. It served as an example provided by both fieldwork interviewees and newspaper articles to point out to the disparities in resources, urban infrastructure, and what a city of the same size could be like. In 1982-3 the population of Umm al-Fahem and Afula was 20,000 and 21500, respectively (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Ministry of Interior, Local Authorities in Israel 1984/85 Financial Data, Published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem 1987 p 59.) [Hebrew]. In 1985 and 1986, the budget of Afula was 3.80 times more than that of Umm al-Fahem, with NIS 11582497 and NIS 3045131 respectively (CBS 1988: 65). In an article on the biggest Arab local governments’ strike against discrimination, which included half a million of Palestinians taking part, Hashim Mahameed told *Yediot Ahronot* how he would love to swap with any of his fellow Jewish mayors to run their towns, just for three weeks, to have a taste of what it is like to work under comfortable conditions with available resources. “I’d like them to come here and take over my seat and then tell me how they could manage a city of 25,000 with such a budget, with such problems and without any budget for development,” said Mahameed. Continuing the same line he asked “why does Auvadia Ali of Afula get a budget which is four or five times bigger than mine and then they come and blame us for mismanagement,” (Kitzal 1987). For Mahameed Umm al-Fahem is not rewarded accordingly. Despite being “loyal to the state, a population which is doing its best to build and work, and in return the state view us as an unwanted, oppressed stepchild. They do not treat us as equal citizens,” (ibid).

map of the city. It was the epitome of the incapacity of the communist-led local government, which eventually brought it down, and paved the way for the Islamic Movement's rise to power. Before elaborating on the latter's rise to power, it would be most relevant to discuss the subject of water which was another factor that contributed to the fundamental change in the political landscape. For many Fahamwais, the straw that broke the camel's back, as the Arabic saying goes, was the systematic water cuts in the city.



**Aquacide and the politics of water: the demise of the communists and the rise of the Islamic Movement**



Figure 30: Umm al-Fahem's Demonstration .. Demanding Water...! (*Al-Ghad* March 1978)

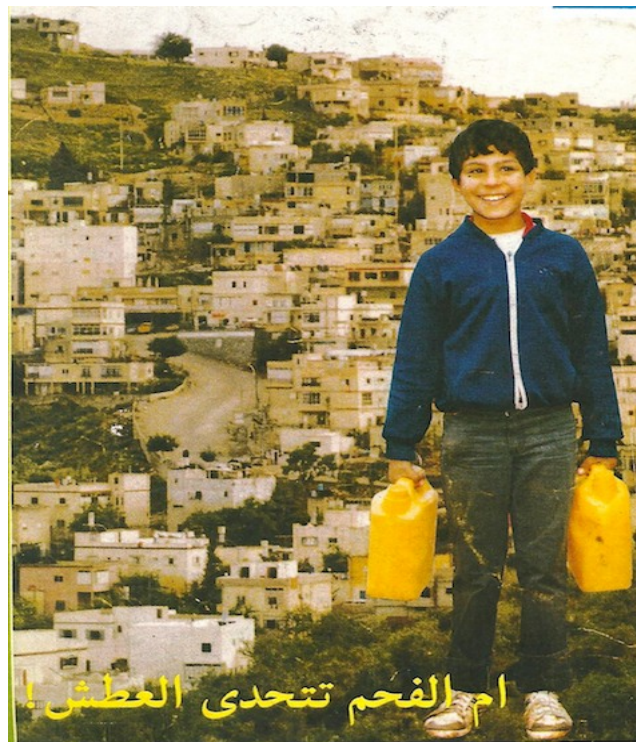


Figure 31: Umm al-Fahem Challenges Water-Starvation! (*Al-Ghad* March 1987)

Twice in one month in 1987 thousands of Fahmawis together with other Palestinian and Jewish progressive forces took to the streets to protest against the policy of water-starvation and financial strangulation (*Al-Ghad* March 1987). The city's water was systematically cut off. In January 1987 *Yediot Ahronot* and *Haaretz* reported that the water supply was cut off for six consecutive days.<sup>263</sup> Cutting the water supply of an entire city was particularly ruthless on hot summer days. This was exacerbated by the fact that the bulk of the city's labour force worked in construction, which meant depriving those workers of the right to wash off the sweat of their working day.

The declared grounds for cutting the water off was the local government's failure to pay its 90,000 Shekels debt to the state water company of *Mekorot*.<sup>264</sup> The real reason, however, was political. Water-starvation policy is what the chapter characterises as aquacide, that is the deliberate policy of cutting off an entire population's water supply for political ends. Water is a powerful tool to further exacerbate the already dire conditions in the city and blame the local government for mismanagement. This policy started in the 1970s (see figure 30) when the elected local government was run by progressive forces associated with the communists and the *Abnaa el-Balad*. It intensified in the mid 1980s when the communists were still in power (see figure 31).

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<sup>263</sup> See 'Umm-el-Fahem Without Water', *Yediot Ahronot* 29 January 1987, p 12 and Frister, R. (1987) 'Water Fuel- Water adding Fuel to Fire', *Haaretz*, 30 January 1987 [Hebrew].

<sup>264</sup> Figures quoted from the sources above. *Mekorot*, a pre-state Zionist water provider, is the national water company which trades itself as "one of the world's most technologically advanced water companies...provides a steady flow of clean water to a rapidly growing population despite the region's limited freshwater resources, arid climate and difficult geopolitical realities." see [www.mekorot.co.il](http://www.mekorot.co.il) [Hebrew].

Fieldwork interviewees and newspapers' articles covering the subject support the argument that water was cut off on political grounds, for political ends. Mahmoud Abu Nasir, a local government councillor, noted in an interview with *Al-Ghad* (1987) that the city's debt was not as big as that of the Kibbutzim movement, from which the water supply was not cut off despite its 550 million U.S. dollars in debt, 22 million of which belonged to one Kibbutz (Mishmar Ha-Negev). *Haaretz* journalist Roman Frister referred to the situation as "a war of attrition" between the establishment and the local government. Wondering if its architects would manage to get rid of the city's mayor, Frister noted that: "whoever shut the water pipes in Umm al-Fahem was of the view that water is an effective political weapon" (Frister 1987).

Contextualising the water crisis, Hashim Mahameed framed it within the saga of his relationship to the state which wanted to rid of him, ostensibly for what they called failed management. Debunking the state's claims, Mahameed in his interview with *Haaretz* journalist gave the following account: "why do they want to get rid of me? The answer is very clear. The establishment, or at least parts of it, has been used to having a submissive Arab leadership. I am a Hutzpan who speaks at the same eye-level ... I'm not one of those who gives his prayers to God every morning that we've got a colour TV ... I am well aware of our rights and I demand their fulfilment. This is a relatively new language being communicated between us and the Jewish establishment, and there are some who would rather not understand it" (Frister 1987).

In support of Mahameed's reading of the situation, Frister revealed that soon after Mahameed was elected, officials from the Ministry of Interior had warned, "with Hashim Mahameed there will be trouble." They have not forgotten that Mahameed had previously referred to Israel's Army as an "occupying army" (ibid).<sup>265</sup> Twenty years later, reflecting on his days in office, Mahameed said "being political was the harshest thing for the [Israeli] establishment ... they just wanted us to manage rubbish collection ... good management was waste management."<sup>266</sup>

In February 1989, the Islamic Movement decided to stand for the local elections for the first time. Electorate participation was impressive and so were the results. Over 80 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote, giving the Islamic Movement's 31-year-old candidate, Sheikh Raed Salah, 75.5 per cent of the votes, 21.5 per cent to Hashim Mahameed and 2.5 per cent to *Abnaa el-Balad*. The Islamic Movement had also won 61.8 per cent of the local government council, reported *Yediot Ahronot* on 1 March 1989 (Broida and Ringel-Hufman 1989). For Fahmawis, the Movement which was initially voted in as a vote for change had soon proved to be successful, with promising performance and leadership capabilities. Since then, the Movement has been repeatedly elected for the local government, thus establishing almost unchallengeable hegemony in the city.

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<sup>265</sup> In July 1988, following the Communist Party request, the Knesset demanded the government allocate three million shekels to resolve the city's water crisis, to the building of a new water tank and for comprehensive changes to the main water grid to be carried out (*Al-Itihad* 1988).

<sup>266</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem, 13 August 2009.

## **Biopolitics in the making: urban renaissance, health, education and the way to hegemony**

Delivering on promises and high performance in the sphere of urban services coupled with possessing material resources and delivering charitable services to the poor, helping establish businesses in the city, as well as being active in the fields of health and education have all contributed to consolidating the Islamic Movement's hegemony in the city.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, from very early on, the Movement displayed high levels of competency, organisational and leadership skills as well as stamina and discipline to prove itself. Embedding itself in the grassroots, the Movement also put special emphasis on involving residents in public activities, especially in the urban and social spheres. Although started in the years prior to 1989 victory, this process was accelerated especially in its early years in office, as many public institutions, such as schools and mosques, fell under its direct sphere of influence.<sup>268</sup> This section will look into the Movement's governmentality and its *modus operandi* particularly in the urban and social spheres. It deconstructs its hegemonic and biopolitical mode of government and touches on its ideological and economic base.

In the urban realm, and within a relatively short period of time, the new administration managed to complete existing major infrastructure projects and initiate new ones. It managed to secure budgets from the Ministry of Interior which would

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<sup>267</sup> As mentioned in footnote number 252, the Movement in various ways has actively helped establish a business class in the city. This is a very important subject that deserves a special section dedicated to it. It is however beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss it effectively.

<sup>268</sup> This is not a comprehensive study of the Islamic Movement. I therefore limit myself mostly to the early years of the Movement's government, which as I said earlier have been formative to the contemporary history of Umm al-Fahem. They were also the years that fieldwork interviewees concentrated on the most.

allow it to continue the work of fitting sewers and revamping major water works,<sup>269</sup> set up a professional strategic town planning unit to deal with the problem of land and spatial planning in the city as well as purchase vehicles and bins for rubbish collection. Accelerating the process of approving detailed master plans, as well as initiating the work on ‘build your house’ housing project were among its priorities.<sup>270</sup> In practical terms, both the subject of detailed plans and preparing the grounds for the housing project meant that the local government was addressing the acute problem of housing and house demolition in the city. In 1991, the new administration also managed to secure money off the state to build two new schools for the 1992 academic year (*Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* 7 June 1991).<sup>271</sup>

Promoting active citizenship and agency by encouraging locals to take responsibility for their local environment was one of the ways to maintain a direct relationship between the newly elected Movement and the residents. This was particularly cultivated through two major events: the Islamic voluntary work brigades and public health events. By 1991, in less than a decade, the Movement had managed to complete eight Islamic voluntary work brigades. Like the previous voluntary work brigades under the communists, the Islamic brigades also centred on accomplishing urban projects.<sup>272</sup> The projects included cleaning and maintenance work to public facilities, especially mosques, paving streets, and building mosques. For example,

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<sup>269</sup> I say continued because work on these two major projects was started by the previous administration, albeit in its last year in office.

<sup>270</sup> On the importance of detailed plans and on the ‘build your house project,’ please see chapter 6 on planning.

<sup>271</sup> See ‘Two New Education Edifices’, *Sawt al-Haq wa al-Hurriyyih* 7 June 1991.

<sup>272</sup> See chapter 5 on historical sociology for more on the communist voluntary work brigades, initiated from the late 1970s till the first half of 1980s.



according to *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* among the projects accomplished in the eighth brigade, carried out in the summer of 1991, were: clearing land for two public parks in the city, planting trees and flowers, paving streets and building two mosques: one in the newly established park and another in the secondary school premises (*Sawt al-Haq wa al-Hurriyyih* 2 August 1991).

To address shortfalls in public health provision and in an attempt to identify serious health and social issues that had been neglected before, particularly in regard to drug abuse, the Movement set up clinics to offer highly subsidised medical, dental, as well as free rehabilitation services. *Al-Rahamah*, the compassion, association, the first of its kind in the Palestinian community, was set up to deal with drug addicts, offering them detoxification and rehabilitation services. Both the healing process and raising awareness about the subject were not limited to the physical confinements of the clinic. The message was taken out to the people through mosques and schools. As far as affordable medical services are concerned, the Islamic *Al-Noor*, the light, clinic was set up to offer 24-hour medical services. The clinic had a dentistry department and an ambulance, which was one of the first, if not the first in the Palestinian community.

Reaching out to people, *Al-Noor* clinic, together with the local government, schools and the *Daa'wa* and Islamic Sciences College, initiated public health events in the city. In 1991, for example, the second weeklong health event took place. The event included a number of activities that were engaging, practical and educational. As well as performing medical checks for chronic and preventable diseases; testing for hypertension, diabetes, heart conditions and dental health and hygiene, public lectures

on raising awareness about health matters and grassroots cleaning campaigns were also a part of it.

In mobilising for the event and in an attempt to encourage the active involvement of schools and neighbourhoods in these events great emphasis was put on the religious duty of keeping clean, along with promoting a system of mundane rewards. The cleanest school, the cleanest neighbourhood, and the best essay written by a school student on the subject of the public health event were to win prizes. Mobilising locals and schools worked. The city was buzzing with activities. Students were in charge of cleaning their schools, mosques and cemeteries. And neighbourhoods were busy cleaning and decorating their streets, drawing on the walls and putting signs up asking people to take care of their environment.

In his concluding comments on the first health event in the city in 1990 which lasted for one day, the mayor Sheikh Raed Salah highlighted the importance of deepening the concept of health, a healthy environment and cleanliness in people's perceptions, and their role in strengthening the sense of belonging. For him these concepts were deeply embedded within Islamic values. In an interview with *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* Salah said: "We are well aware that deepening people's awareness in general and inculcating values in their minds and behaviours are indispensable to the building of society. Therefore, through this day we sought to deepen the concept of health, cleanliness, and healthy environments in students' and residents' lives, hoping that each individual in Umm al-Fahem will have a sense of responsibility in keeping Umm al-Fahem and its streets clean. Coupling material resources with general awareness will help us bring fundamental change to this aspect of our lives...I would like to thank all those who made the day successful and have worked on inculcating



the values which promote faith and which Islam has imprinted in the slogan, ‘cleanliness emanates from faith’ (*Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* 15 June 1990).

The realm of education was another avenue through which the Movement tried to establish itself and spread deeply into society. This took several shapes and forms and over the years has developed to include other spheres of influence.<sup>273</sup> In its beginnings, the Movement put special emphasis on the early-years age group, a potentially easy-going generation for indoctrination and the building of the Muslim Man. During the 1980s the Movement set up Islamic nurseries and the *Taw-a’iyha* association for raising awareness. The association’s prime audience was school children offering them extracurricular activities in the fields of physical education, preparation for university admission exams, educational excursions, as well as religious education.<sup>274</sup>

Another potentially influential group to cater for was future teachers in religious studies as well as Imams and preachers. In 1989/1990, the *Al-Noor* association for science and Islamic studies established the *Daa’wa* and Islamic Sciences College. Among the College objectives were training teachers, Imams, and preachers in Islamic studies and enhancing their abilities (especially Imams and preachers) in providing guidance to the public ([test.islamic-college.org/News/543](http://test.islamic-college.org/News/543)). Although the

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<sup>273</sup> It was not until mid 1990s that the Movement started to work and organise amongst university students, primarily through the *Eqraa* foundation. *Eqraa* offers a variety of services to students and students-to-be, including financial support. Deepening religious and national consciousness and the preservation of the Islamic and Arabic identity is one of its objectives. For further information see [www.eqraa.com](http://www.eqraa.com) [Arabic].

<sup>274</sup> *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* details the activities of *Abu-Thir* centre which was opened under the patronage of the *Taw-aiyah* association. For more details see *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* (1991) ‘Under the Patronage of *Taw-aiyah* Association in Umm al-Fahem’, 12 April 1991 [Arabic].

*Daa'wa* College was not officially recognised, authorised or funded by the state, the Movement's relatively strong financial base meant that graduates could be employed and incorporated in the Islamic Movement's frameworks and activities (Ringil-Hofman 1993).<sup>275</sup>

To go deeper into society, a committee for propagating *Daa'wa*, that is the call for the revival of Islamic identity and values, was set up. Its activities were not limited to mosques, but spread to include home visits, public and social occasions such as weddings and funerals. To help reach out to as many people as possible the Islamic *Al-Shuruq*, the sunrise, pirate cable station was set up.<sup>276</sup> *Daa'wa* was not only diverse in location but also flexible in time. For example, in the latest *Daa'wa* week which took place in the first week of May 2014, cadre members of the Movement used the main entrances to the city to distribute leaflets and refreshments at the crack of dawn to workers who were on their way to work out of the city, ([---

<sup>275</sup> According to Ringil-Hofman of \*Yediot Ahronot\* \(18 June 1993\), the president of the Islamic college from 1989 to 1993 \(when the article was written\) was from a West Bank village near Ramallah, who graduated from Saudi Arabia. To employ him the Movement had to get a special permit from the Israeli authorities. According to the Movement, he was chosen for his persona and qualifications. Among the Arabs in Israel no one had his qualifications. This piece of information is interesting in itself, especially in the context of the model of Islamic teaching that could be influenced by the conservative Saudi school of thought that promotes strict Islamic values, especially in relation to social matters. In his critical article on the politics of promoting social conservatism through the strict puritanical version of Saudi Arabia's Islam, Timothy Mitchell \(2002\) deconstructs the relationship between this and imperialism. He claims that the underlying motivation behind the Saudi version of Islam, which it seeks to export to other countries, is geopolitical and is linked to keeping the Middle East under control. Their form of Islam encourages social conservatism, and keeping away from mundane politics. This is welcomed and encouraged by imperialist countries, primarily the U.S.A..](http://www.um-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

<sup>276</sup> *Al-Shuruq* pirate station was closed down by the state in 1991. See *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* (1991) 'The Authorities [Israeli authorities] Close Down the Islamic *Al-Shuruq* Station', 18 October 1991.

[elfahem.net](http://elfahem.net)). At the centre of all of these activities and institutions stood the production of the Muslim Man, with an emphasis on Islamic morals, rituals and the reciting of the Quran.<sup>277</sup>

In a society which already felt a strong affinity to religion and suffered from state racism and low socio-economic conditions, adopting Islam as its ideology provided the Movement with a privileged position from which appealing to people to win their hearts and go deep into them was not as challenging, when compared to other political forces. The communists and other secular forces could not fully provide tangible answers to people's everyday problems and did not have a strong economic base either.<sup>278</sup> This *organic ideology*, to borrow from Gramsci (Hall 1986: 20 [original emphasis]), is deeply embedded in society. Not only did it resonate with existing practices and rituals which are part and parcel of everyday life, but it also had ready-made socially legitimate *modus operandus* and organisational structures and spaces, such as mosques, Friday sermons, alms, that is the non-obligatory giving of charity and *Zakat*, the obligatory duty of giving charities. *Zakat*, which is one of the fifth pillars of Islam, together with alms, provided the material basis for charity, welfare and social solidarity.

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<sup>277</sup> In 1999, the Movement set up the *Hiraa* Foundation for the memorisation of Quran. The foundation has more than 70 centres and 20 schools across the country. It is particularly active in school years, in both primary and secondary schools. For more information see [www.hiraa.net](http://www.hiraa.net) [Arabic].

<sup>278</sup> Political Islam is particularly empowering in a context where there is political oppression, combined with a failure of nationalist secular forces to offer a solution. Umm al-Fahem in this sense is not an isolated example but part and parcel of regional and global political and social developments. The rise of the Movement to power and the demise of the communists coincided with the demise and defeat of global communism and the triumph of identity politics, religious revivalism and neoliberalism.

## Mosques boom

Becoming the guardian of religious, moral and social affairs in the city, including the collection of *Zakat* and alms, allowed the Movement to have a mosques building boom in the city.<sup>279</sup> The mosques boom would not only transform Umm al-Fahem's cityscape but would also mean a further consolidation to the Movement's hegemonic rule. Historically the city had four major mosques operating in the four historic neighbourhoods of the city. Since the Movement's rise to power, over 20 new mosques were built, some on state land and others on land donated by residents.<sup>280</sup> The Movement also renovated two of the old mosques in the city. In the second half of the 1980s and before winning the 1989 elections, the Movement demolished the old 100-squared-metre and one-storey mosque in the Ighbariyih neighbourhood to build a new 550-squared-metre modern complex.<sup>281</sup> The four-storey complex, named Abu Oubaida, completed in 1989, hosted a mosque, the Islamic medical clinic of Al-Noor, a venue for public events, and the Movement's offices.

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<sup>279</sup> On the issue of charity and ordinary people's donations to the Movement, see the example of women donating their gold jewelry to the Movement: *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* (1991) 'Umm al-Fahem's Women Donate their Jewelry', 2 August 1991.

<sup>280</sup> In Islam donating private land for public purposes, such as a mosque is a good deed that is considered a ceaseless charity (*sadaqah jariyah*) that rewards its donor with continuous positive points called *hasanat*.

<sup>281</sup> The demolishing of the old mosque, with residents' consent, was a *carte blanche* for the Movement to do whatever it saw suitable to any mosque in the city. For some Fahmawis, the modern Abu Oubaida complex is an alien object that was forced and imposed on the environment. To regulate the mosque's temperature, for example, the new mosque has to depend on technology, which is liable to break down. The old mosque, in contrast, was built in a harmonious vernacular style, with thick walls and long vertical windows that kept it cooled down in the summer and warm in the winter. This meant that worshippers' spiritual time was not interrupted by sweat or cold. The mosque also had water well and a palm tree to rest under. It also had no high stairs either, which made it more accessible for the elderly.

Abu Oubaida soon became the Islamic Movement edifice in the city and the symbol of its hegemonic power. It occupied a central role in the everyday life of the city and symbolised the spatial shift on the local political map. It replaced the historic city centre of Al-Meedan, which was the hub for political and cultural activities prior to 1989.<sup>282</sup> The complex became a political and cultural symbol, hosting weekly lectures on religious, cultural, social and political affairs, all under the Movement's auspices. It also became the centre for *Daa'wa* work and the dissemination of the Islamic message. Politically, socially and culturally, Abu Oubaida became the meeting and commencing point of the Movement's public activities, such as festive marches. Another fact that helped promote and maintain the mosque's centrality has been its Friday sermon preacher, Sheikh Raed Salah. Sheikh Salah, a political and religious leader with a charismatic and popular personality, has been the mosque's prime preacher since its establishment; all through his tenure as a mayor (1989-1999) up until today.

As expected, the majority of mosques in the city came under the direct control of the Movement. As mosques are not only places of worship, but also places of education, indoctrination and discipline, this also provided the Movement with an advantageous position. Politically, through the mosques, the Movement could gain direct access to a large number of people who could be brought under its influence. Therefore, unlike other political forces in the city, the Movement had multiple political headquarters

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<sup>282</sup> Al-Meedan was home to the communist party club, the *Abnaa el-Balad* club, *Al-Itihad* newspaper office, and was a transport hub of the city where workers would gather to go to their work, a commercial centre and the place where political leaflets would be distributed and where many demonstrations would start. Historically it was also the place where Fahmawis were told they were part of Israel in 1949 and where they were asked to hand over all their resistance guns to the Israeli army.

where it could exercise its power to promote its agenda and contribute to consolidating its hegemony.<sup>283</sup>

Situating Islam and Islamic identity and values at the centre of any of the Movement's activities was perhaps its unequivocal principal strength, as it managed to successfully couple practices with ideology. It was certainly one of the main factors which contributed to establishing and maintaining the Movement's hegemony in the city and which allowed it to carry out its biopolitical projects successfully. After all, the Islamic Movement won the elections under the banner of 'Islam is the solution,' which was presented as the panacea for all the troubles that distressed and interrupted Umm al-Fahem's life, including the sewage that flowed in the streets of the city.

### **The state and the Islamic Movement**

The Islamic Movement's hard work and commitment to develop the city and improve its socio-spatial conditions was enhanced by a shift in the way the state related to the city under the new administration. Shortly after winning the local elections, the Ministry of Interior, headed by Rabbi Aryeh Deri of the religious party of Shas, had decided to write off all the city's debts and increase its budgets to 16 million shekels

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<sup>283</sup> According to the Islamic department at the Ministry of Religions, 160 mosques were built in the space of five years, between 1989 and 1993. Prior to that there were only 80 mosques in the entire country between 1949-1989 (Ringil-Hofman 1993).

for the year 89-90.<sup>284</sup> The decision came after the minister convened a meeting with the newly elected mayor Raed Salah and other local government members to discuss the city's problems (*Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* 3 November 1989). The budgets increased 3.77 times for the years 1990-91 and 6.81 times for the year 1993 compared to 1987-1988 (CBS 1990: 69-70, 1993: 82). Moreover, in the attempt to push the city forward, in March 1991 the same ministry sent a delegation to the local government to study and discuss a 30 million shekels recovery plan for the city. The plan's objective was to develop the city and improve its infrastructure and conditions so that it joined the ranks of other development cities in the country (*Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* 15 March 1991).

In contrast to Islamophobia that often characterises the Israeli discourse and the hostile image that the media often promotes about the Islamic Movement, the state has developed more of an amicable relationship to the city since the overwhelming victory of the Movement in 1989. The increase of the local government budgets and the special plans for boosting the city's development constitute living examples of the shift in the relationship to the city. The underlying motivation behind this shift is the state's preferential policy of promoting religious politics that are inherently exclusionist and particularistic. This would also mean the fragmentation of the Palestinians along religious lines and equally important the weakening of the

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<sup>284</sup> For more information see, 'Ministry of Interior Write off all of Umm al-Fahem's Debts and Allocate "16" Million Shekels for the City's Budget this Year', *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih*, 3 November 1989.

Also, Minister of the Interior, Rabbi Derih in his first official visit to the city praised the commonalities between his party and that of the Islamic movement, emphasising that both worship the same god. This was particularly insulting for those who are Muslims but with leftist politics. "As if we worshipped a different god," said one research interviewee, August 2009.

nationalist secular forces, primarily the communists, who were particularly popular among the Palestinians in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>285</sup>

The Islamic Movement with its social and moral agenda, as well as focus on local rather than national politics, seemed more tolerable in those years than nationalist secular movements who were fighting in the name of the Palestinian people as a whole. The Movement's 1989 elections campaign proved the state's choice particularly true. Anti-communism and presenting Islam as the solution were the campaign's two principal themes as discussed previously. The Movement's prime rivals were not the state but the communists, whom it blamed for mismanagement and social decadence. The communists were also denounced as atheists and infidels whose beliefs were contradictory to Islamic norms and religion.

On a number of occasions when the Movement came under fire by the media, and when some Israeli politician's called for its banning, senior state officials came to its defence. For example, in 1993, Shmuel Toledano, the Prime Minister's advisor for Arab Affairs between 1966-1977, wrote an article in *Haaretz* defending the Islamic Movement against accusations which linked the Movement to the militant Islamic Movement of Hamas which operated in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territories. His article titled 'Not all are Hamas' (*Haaretz* 29 July 1993) came as a response to the

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<sup>285</sup> Dr Alexander Bligh, prime minister vice advisor and later advisor for Arab affairs (1987-1990, 1990-1992 respectively), told *Yediot Ahronot* that in the 1980s the state tried to revive the Akka based Al-Jazzar college for religious teaching that used to be the biggest college in Palestine before 1948, but its attempts failed. The college did not manage to attract students. Students of religious studies chose to go to the West bank colleges of Hebron and Nablus. For more details see (Ringil-Hofman 1993).



concluding comments in *Haaretz* 23 July 1993 made by the journalist Ze'ev Schiff that Hamas was permeating Israel. Toledano believes that Ze'ev's conclusion was wrong. He also warned against generalisation and what he called irrational fears which Jews have of the Israeli Arabs.

To support his argument, Toledano provided a number of reasons, which could be qualified as revelations from within the establishment. Up until 1975, he noted, the government policy was to encourage religiosity among Muslims in Israel, especially amongst the young generation. The rationale behind it was to weaken the increasing popularity of the Communist Party. The assumption was as he put it "a religious Muslim will have to be against a Communist Party which does not believe in religion." For this, the government allocated budgets for (re)constructing mosques, gave extensive autonomy for the religious courts, set up Muslim trustee committees in mixed cities, etc.

According to him, and in light of the increasing interest in religious revivalism among the Muslim Arabs, special government bodies in charge of dealing with Arab affairs became less unanimous in regards to the policy which should be adopted. One group was in favour of continuing with the same policy line of actively encouraging religious revivalism. The other group was in favour of adopting a policy of what could be read as inactive interference, while keeping a close eye on developments on the ground. In either case, the government did not adopt a policy of inhibiting the Islamic Movement from increasing its popularity.

Importantly, Toledano noted that the growing power of the Movement did not alarm the security services, despite the public's increasing concerns. According to him, the

security services knew very well the fundamental differences between Hamas and the Islamic Movement. They knew that the Movement in Israel was not Hamas. The two had substantive differences in regard to their relationships to the state and the objective socio-economic and political conditions under which they were operating. The Islamic Movement, unlike Hamas, recognised Israel and was against armed resistance. Hamas operated under the reality of occupation. Distressing socio-economic and political conditions prompted the Palestinians of the occupied territories to look for “a redeeming answer,” which Hamas provided (ibid). It also addressed their national aspirations. The Islamic Movement in Israel was operating in a society with relatively better socio-economic and political conditions.

Toledano’s revelation resonates with policy recommendations made by Yisrael Koenig, the police commissioner in the northern district of Israel (1964-1976), in his 1976 confidential document to the Ministry of Interior.<sup>286</sup> Although Koenig does not directly relate to the encouragement of religious identities among the Palestinians as a way of fragmenting and controlling them, he certainly does state clearly the need to weaken the increasing popularity of the Communist Party. Describing what he called “the demographic problem and the manifestations of Arab nationalism” Koenig wrote: “[t]he era of international victories by the Palestinians and the achievements of the nationalists in Israel point to a process of open confrontation with the Arab problem in Israel, a process which will grow as long as *RAKAH* [the Communist

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<sup>286</sup> The report first came to public in September 1976, after the MAPAM daily newspaper *Al HaMishmar* had leaked it. Although it was not publicly endorsed as an official government document, the report does reflect how powerful segments of the state and its security apparatuses perceived the Palestinians (MERIP 1976). It should also be noted that the northern district has the highest percentage of Palestinians in Israel.

Party] carries the resistance to the establishment exclusively ... The usurping by *RAKAH* of 'quasigovernmental' institutions, such as the local councils, creates a legitimate basis for a political nationalistic activity, both overt and clandestine, adopting methods that were in use by the Jewish community in the 'pre state era,' as well as worldwide communist methods..." (Koenig 1976: 12 [original emphasis]).

To confront this, Koenig's recommendation was, "[t]o deny *RAKAH* its 'priority' in carrying out a national struggle and representing Israeli Arabs and to provide a valve for communities still sitting on the 'fence,' a sister Labor Party should be established in which the stress will be on ideas of equality, humanism and language, social struggle and on raising the banner of peace in the region. The establishment has to prepare itself to maintain covert presence and control in the party" (ibid [original emphasis]).

Jumping back to the 1990s, in March 1992 the Minister of Arab Affairs, David Magen, came against some calls to outlaw the Islamic Movement in light of the revelation that those responsible for the killing of three Israeli soldiers in the Kibbutz of Gilaad were members of the Islamic Movement of Umm al-Fahem. In an interview with the army radio station, Galaz, Magen said that the Islamic Movement operates as a legitimate religious movement and that the public statements made by its leadership were within the law. According to him, in cases where there is incitement against the

state in mosques and other frameworks, both the legal and security arms of the state know how to deal with it (Regev 1992).<sup>287</sup>

To conclude, in the final analysis, what the state fears the most is a seriously organised political movement which challenges its interests and colonial policies, regardless of the former identity, whether Islamist, communist or even Jewish.<sup>288</sup> The Islamic Movement, although recognised and praised for its charitable work, is also closely monitored by the state's security services. To illustrate this, in September 1999, when revelations were made in relation to the involvement of Islamic Movement members in terror attacks against Israel, Prime Minister Ehud Barak, according to *Yediot Ahronot* 23 September 1999, warned against making sweeping generalisations about the Movement which according to him should be recognised for its important charity work. At the same time, the decision was made to set up a police station in Umm al-Fahem which would enforce law and order (Shaked, Douek and

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<sup>287</sup> For more information see Regev, D. (1992) 'Islamic Jihad in Gaza Warns the Head of the Islamic Movement in Israel: 'Withdraw Your Condemnation of the Killing of the IDF Soldiers - or You'll be Liquidated'', *Yediot Ahronot*, 8 March 1992: 10 [Hebrew]. It should be also noted that the killing incident prompted Umm al-Fahem's local government to issue a statement condemning the killing of the soldiers (see *ibid*). On the Movement being closely monitored by the state see (Ringil-Hofman 1993). Her article revealed that the Minister of Defence Office, the Prime Minister Office and the security services all receive a translated copy of the Islamic Movement newspaper and mouthpiece, *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih*.

<sup>288</sup> The Black Panthers movement in Israel, which was made up of Mizrahi Jews with very strong class, and social justice consciousness, was smashed by the state.

Shiffer 1999), or in other words, which would closely monitor the movement's activities and hold them in check.<sup>289</sup>

### **Control from within: morality and social conservatism in the city**

When the Movement emerged into the local scene first as a social and later as a political force it took on the mission of imposing a strict puritanical form of Islam as part of religious revivalism. As part of this process, the Movement sought to alter existing cultural and social practices, which it denounced as decadent, and to produce instead a new normative order and new Muslim Man and society. The chapter identifies three sites where the Movement sought to pursue its agenda. These are: the attack on the communist and nationalist secular forces and the secular culture associated with them,<sup>290</sup> the introduction of the Islamic wedding, and the female body.

Operating in a city that at the time had sizable nationalist and communist forces made the Islamic Movement's task particularly interesting. Armed with self-righteousness, and acting as the guardian of religion and morality in the city the Movement waged a smear campaign against the communists and secular political forces. It introduced

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<sup>289</sup> The mayor Sheikh Raed Salah objected to setting up a police station in the city (Shaked, Douek and Shiffer 1999). Despite the objection, the plan went ahead. The police station is located at the main entrance to the city. While conducting my fieldwork, the police was often driving through the city. In recent years and light of the wave of violence that swept the city and which left it with a few cases of murder, locals expressed their anger and frustration with the police who have not managed to bring criminals into justice.

<sup>290</sup> Secularism is relative. Umm al-Fahem before the Movement was not really a secular society. It was always a Muslim conservative society but in a relaxed way. It was relatively secular in the context of the strict interpretation of what a Muslim society should be from the Islamic Movement's perspective. Moreover, the secular nationalist forces were not anti-religious as such. For them, religion was a private matter. From their perspective and in the context of living under a reality of national oppression and racialised politics, the focus and the efforts should be on fighting these mundane matters. For them the prime oppressor was the state. Some members and supporters of the communist party and/or the *Abnaa el-Balad* movement were and are practicing Muslims. They did/do follow Islamic rituals and fulfil/ed, if not all then many of, the five pillars of Islam.

binary brandings and judgments of believers/non-believers, religious/non-religious, thus vilifying those who were not part of religious revivalism as infidels, even atheists.<sup>291</sup> The attack was extended to include a rejection of anyone and anything that was not part of the Movement. On a few occasions, the attacks were physical, for example, tomatoes and eggs were thrown at non-Islamic voluntary work brigades, as those were not male-only events. The Movement promoted gender segregation and boycotted gender mixed events.

As can be expected, over the years, and especially after 1989, the nationalist, secular and left leaning discourse started to shift into a religious one. This meant that what was once a city of big demonstrations and national commemorations, a city of outdoors political rallies and events had entered a new phase and developed new priorities. Nationalist and political events and celebrations either dwindled in size or changed form altogether. Symbolic olive tree planting replaced the Land Day annual commemoration, which used to be remembered by a general strike and a big demonstration. With years, the Land Day could hardly be noticed in the city. Moreover, the outdoors annual public celebrations of the International Workers Day

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<sup>291</sup> In a conservative society these are strong allegations that could be frustrating and inhibiting at the same time.

of the first of May became almost extinct.<sup>292</sup> Instead, religious rallies and celebrations started to take place.

When the Movement came to power, another area of interest it sought to influence was formal education. Pressure was put on teachers in the secondary school to conform to the Movement line. In a number of incidents, teachers, especially those associated with the Communist Party, were even sacked. For example, in 1990 the new local government dismissed the secondary school Arabic teacher (Shabi 1990). He was suspended on the grounds that he hurt students' religious feelings by choosing to teach a poem that was critical of fatalism and destiny.<sup>293</sup> "The teacher hurt the students' feelings, and has left them confused, after having attacked some of the principles of Islam. The students believe in those principles with no evidence. When we believe in God we do not see him and we do not hear him," said the deputy mayor in an interview about the dismissal case (ibid).<sup>294</sup>

As part of the cultural and political shift, and the attempts to produce new subjectivities and a new identity, the Movement sought to change the name of the city from Umm al-Fahem to Umm el-Noor, the mother of light. The change of name implied that the Movement was lifting Umm al-Fahem from darkness into light: the

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<sup>292</sup> The disappearance of non-religious events is not to blame the Movement for. It was more the defeatism experienced by leftist forces and the change of the local, even international political climate as a result of change in the local and international political map. The First of May celebrations were also affected by the international defeat of communism, which was epitomised by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Locally, the Movement's priorities and agenda were clearly religious.

<sup>293</sup> The poem he taught was Nizzar Qabani's, *Bread, Hashish and Moon*. For more information on the case, including an interview with the dismissed teacher and the local government's response, see Shabi, A. (1990) 'Dismissed because of a Poem', *Yediot Ahronot*, 8 June 1990, 7 days: 49-50. [Hebrew].

<sup>294</sup> According to the newspaper article, three of the teacher's students who were associated with the Islamic Movement, reported to the parents' committee, which in turn reported to the local government.

light of religion and the straight path, the light of the power of belief.<sup>295</sup> In the sphere of everyday colloquial language, for example, non-religious greetings were replaced with religious ones. The Movement worked hard to change existing social norms and practices. Many things became *haram* and banned. One of the most noticeable changes in the social sphere was the banning of the folkloric wedding and the introduction instead of the religious wedding.

### **The religious wedding**

In a society where a heteronormative wedding occupies a central social event, attempts to control its rituals and celebrations become a crucial site of the struggle for power. It is no wonder therefore that the Movement sought to introduce its own version of how a wedding should be conducted and celebrated. As part of the *haram/halal* binary system that the Movement introduced in its way to materialising what it called the new Muslim society, through the introduction of the religious wedding the Movement aimed to obliterate existing wedding practices, traditions and rituals. The folkloric rituals of celebrating a wedding with the *haddah*, the folkloric singer, preceded by the *zaffah*, the celebratory procession of the groom accompanied by a chorus of women singing traditional wedding songs marching in the streets of the city after having a bath at one of his friends' home, were all rejected, banned and declared *haram*. Gender segregation in weddings was another major *haram*. The

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<sup>295</sup> Although the name was not changed officially, Umm el-Noor still features in the Movement's literature and documentation. For example, in a questionnaire about the mosques in the city, the name of the city appears under Umm el-Noor, not Umm al-Fahem.



female and male members of the family of a groom or bride were not allowed to mix together in one place.

So the religious wedding was a wedding stripped of celebrations, music, and the folkloric scene. As part of the new tradition, a wedding would start with reciting the Quran. This would be followed by what one of the interviewees called “a distorted theatrical sketch,” which was not relevant to a wedding day.<sup>296</sup> Towards the end of the wedding, a charismatic leader, such as Sheikh Raed Salah, or Abdulallah Nimr Darweesh (cofounders of the Islamic Movement), would deliver a sermon. Prior to the wedding ceremony and in order to attract people to attend it, a message would be disseminated in mosques that a charismatic leader would be attending the wedding.<sup>297</sup>

### **Veiling the *ummah*: the *hijab* as the zeitgeist of religious revivalism and high morality**

Women’s bodies embody the zeitgeist of religious revivalism. With the emergence of the Islamic Movement, the female body was perhaps one of most conspicuous marker of change in the city.<sup>298</sup> It became and in fact remains the site on which social and political developments are inscribed. While wearing a scarf has always been part of the culture before the emergence of the Movement, especially amongst married and old women, the distinctiveness of the Movement lies in its proactive missionary, all-ages campaign to veil female bodies. As part of the perspective that saw women’s

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<sup>296</sup> Fieldwork interview, Umm al-Fahem 12 July 2009.

<sup>297</sup> Locals attest that the phenomenon of the strict religious wedding has faded away. Religious weddings are more relaxed nowadays and some of the things that were banned, no longer exist. They even talked about ‘religious disco,’ that is using pop music from the Arab world, but changing the lyrics to Islamic ones.

<sup>298</sup> The increase in the number of mosques in the city as well as veiled women were the most visible socio-spatial markers of change in the city.

bodies as repositories of morality for men and women alike, the vulnerable link that needs to be protected and governed, the Movement promoted the veil as the best way possible to protect a woman and therefore protect a man as well (See figure 32).



Figure 32: The veil is a protection for a woman and a chastity for a man

Promoted as a religious duty, a covering veil, which ensured the hair, the ears, as well as the neck were properly covered, became the centrepiece of many of *Daa'wa* circles. The veil was an all-ages matter, not exclusive to mature or married women (see figure 32 which shows a veiled young girl in the sign promoting the *hijab*).

Veiled young schoolgirls, who also fulfilled their religious duties such as fasting the entire month of Ramadan, were used as exemplary models of Islamic upbringing.<sup>299</sup>

Visualising the message, whether through newspapers articles, or putting signs up in the streets asking women to wear the *hijab* and dress modestly, as part of their religious duty and obedience to god, were also among the powerful tools to promote the *hijab*. The message, especially the visualised one, was often addressed singularly and often personally. As the images show (figure 32 & 34) the semantics and the language of the text placed the onus of a man's sexuality on the female body. The veil was only one part of the story. Dressing modestly was equally important. Whether the message of the veil was protection for the woman, and chastity for the man (figure 32), or that flaunting is a war on God and his messenger (figure 33) or the one which asked women not to sell their beauty for the cheapest of gazes (figure 34), they all shared the message that a woman is responsible not only for her body's morality but for the man's as well, and therefore society as a whole.

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<sup>299</sup> Under the title of 'An Example of Islamic Upbringing', *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih* published a photograph of a veiled seven-year-old girl who had fasted Ramadan. See, 'An Example of Islamic Upbringing', *Sawt Al-Haq wa Al-Hurriyyih*, 26 April 1991 [Arabic].



Figure 33: Flaunting.. is a war on Allah and his Messenger and is a losing trade



Figure 34: Sister.. Do not sell your beauty for the cheapest gaze

The scale of the campaign and the multitude of methods used to promote it proved successful. The number of veiled women of all-ages increased exponentially. Veiling the *ummah* however had social and political repercussions. It worked as a screening method which dichotomised society and increased its controlling gaze. Socially, the veil as a visible marker of identity made unveiled women more visible and perhaps less spatially and socially comfortable, rendering the simplest of activities such as strolling a street less comfortable and more bodily conscious. The veiled/unveiled

dichotomy and the controlling gaze become even more powerful in a context of a city that offers little anonymity.<sup>300</sup>

Politically, especially in the immediate years before and after 1989, the veil demonstrated the binary divide between those who were with the Movement and those who were not, those who went to the mosque and those who did not, those who went to Al-Aqsa Mosque and those who did not.<sup>301</sup> On the other hand, the veil as a register of high morality provided a veiled woman with a *carte blanche* to be more spatially comfortable with her body. As figure 34 asserts, the veil and modesty protect the woman from the gazing eyes.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has discussed the workings of governmentality in the city in two different but complementary contexts. The first was in relation to the state and how through employing a mixture of technologies and reliance on the structure of democratic local elections it sought to incorporate Fahmawis into their own subjugation. For the state, incapacitating the communist-led local government through under-budgeting that rendered it incompetent and incapable of delivering the most basic of services on one hand, and endorsing and financially supporting the winning Islamic Movement through budget grants and writing off debts, on the other hand, was the way forward. Encouraging tamed religious identities and reducing subjects to their faith seemed the

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<sup>300</sup> See chapter 6 on planning for the controlling gaze under particular land and planning system, which makes everyday activities in the streets more challenging for both veiled and unveiled women alike.

<sup>301</sup> Visiting al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem a number of times a week all along the year has been one of the main missions and projects of the Islamic Movement. For more information see: [www.iaqsa.com](http://www.iaqsa.com) [Arabic].

best way to weaken the potentially threatening communists and nationalist politics at a time when their popularity was on the increase.

The second context was in relation to how the victorious Islamic Movement sought to render the residents of Umm al-Fahem governable. The chapter discussed how the Movement since winning the local government elections in 1989 has been repeatedly voted in, thus establishing itself as a hegemonic power. The very materiality of the city which brought the preceding local government down helped facilitate the Movement's rise to power. High performance in delivering public services, exhibiting leadership and organisational skills, embedding itself in the grassroots, and mobilising them to take care of their environment, as well as addressing some of the acute shortages in the city in the realms of public health and hygiene, education, and housing, and situating religion at the centre of all its activities were amongst the mechanisms that contributed to consolidating the Movement's hegemony.

The chapter identified this mode of governmentality as biopolitical par excellence. It showed how biopolitical projects carried out by the Movement reinforced its hegemony and vice versa. The projects were versatile: concerned with life, body politics and correcting the morality of society and the creation of a new normative cultural order. In the realm of public health, the Movement set up a highly subsidised 24-hour medical clinic that had an ambulance at its service. It also addressed the long neglected problem of drug addiction by setting up a rehabilitation clinic and carrying out public campaigns raising awareness about the subject. The names given to these clinics, *Al-Noor*, the light and *Al-Rahamah*, compassion, are themselves biopolitical and carry the message of transition to positive progress. The Movement also carried out health events, offering the public free medical checks and raising awareness about

preventable diseases. In the realm of urban hygiene, it completed fitting public sewers, replacing water pipes in addition to purchasing rubbish collection vehicles and bins.

In the realm of education, it set up Islamic nurseries and associations, including a *Daa'wa* college, that was dedicated to Islamic teachings and spreading the message of *Daa'wa* that called for reviving Islamic identity and Islamic practices. It also built dozens of mosques which were under its sphere of influence. In regards to official education, the Movement sought to impose an atmosphere of social conformism. In a few incidents when teachers did not conform to its line of thought, as in the case of the secondary school Arabic teacher, they were dismissed.

The chapter discussed how the organic base of its ideology which already possessed existing socially and economically legitimate *modus operandi* was indispensable to the Movement's relatively strong economic base which allowed for and legitimised its biopolitical hegemonic mode of government. It also discussed how biopolitical hegemony coupled with becoming the voice of authority in moral and social issues was used to Islamise the social, the cultural and the spatial. It helped diminish existing social and cultural practices that were denounced as decadent and introduce instead the Movement's version of Islamic practice and culture. The chapter referred to this mode of government as control from within. It discussed how through promoting social conformism in the name of religion and creation of new subjectivities and a new society, concentrating on bodily politics, in the shape of the female body, gender segregation and the Islamic weddings, a general atmosphere of becoming consumed with these matters over political nationalist ones was facilitated.

To conclude, the chapter showed how the reliance on the colonised to govern, control and fragment themselves in ways that are unthreatening to the state was invaluable. It illustrated how the latter was to a large extent successful in promoting religious identities, thus fragmenting the Palestinians along these lines and shifting the nationalist and secular discourse and cultural references towards becoming more religious. The communists and nationalist forces suffered an enduring defeat, thus radically transforming the city's local political map. The once vocal city of mass mobilisations, demonstrations which challenged the state's oppressive and racialised policies has over the years retreated to focus more on local, social and religious matters. In other words, the chapter demonstrates how the state was relatively successful in fragmenting Palestinians along religious lines and domesticating and dociling their cities.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> I say relatively because in crucial moments in the history of Palestinians, Umm al-Fahem still played an important role in leading demonstrations. The bloody events of 1998, mentioned in chapter 6 on planning, after the declaration of some of Umm al-Fahem's land as a military fire zone, and the 2000 October events after the break out of the 2000 Palestinian intifada are two cases in point.



## Conclusion

In this thesis I have sought to conceptualise and form an understanding of the Palestinian city in Israel and ask whether the right to the city could be fulfilled under (post)colonial conditions. The right to the city in this context means the right to urbanity, diversity, full substantive citizenship, and to live without the burden of colonisation and racism which carries with it potential encroachments on personal and collective liberties and rights, the spectre of an existential threat and life in suspension and precariousness. It is the right to a city of personal and collective potencies, a city of opportunities and potentialities, production and employment, heterogeneity and assemblages, openness and tolerance, culture and creativity. It is the right to a social, political and cultural site where subcultures and countercultures can emerge, where one can enjoy being impersonal and have the right of association with other likeminded groups and individuals, and where, in the spirit of David Harvey (2008:23), individuals can change themselves by being able to change and shape their environment.

Through unsettling the nominal status of the city of Umm al-Fahem, the first Palestinian village to gain the official status of a city in Israel, I have set out to try and find answers to my concerns about the absence of functioning Palestinian cities, urbanisation and urbanism in Israel, the limited, if not absence of, neutral public spaces and job opportunities. The changing character and socio-spatial, political and everyday conditions of Palestinians' localities, and increasing consumerism and articulations of neoliberal values, or the ascendancy of consumerist citizenship in

Palestinians' everyday life, as Paul Gilroy (2010) would put it, were some of these concerns. My premise was that cities, the way they are organised, produced and reproduced reflect historical, social, political, and economic developments that contribute to their (un)making and as such provide analytical tools to examine these developments with.

Articulating these concerns in what seemed to be the most efficient and direct way of finding answers, I decided to ask the simple question: is Umm al-Fahem a city? I thought that the residents of Umm al-Fahem were the only ones who could provide a satisfactory answer to whether the transition in Umm al-Fahem's administrative status has been substantive. Their lived experiences simultaneously question the functionality of the city and challenge its claims to being a city. Therefore, ethnography and immersing myself in the field, meeting with residents and the city's planning department, taking photographs of its built-environment, and trying to grasp its semiotics seemed the most suitable method, at least in the first phase of the research.

While in the field, I soon realised that the simple question unravelled a complicated, multifaceted, and multi-contextual story that needed to be unpacked. I also realised that although the main research question remained indispensable to the prime objective of conceptualising the Palestinian city, providing a definitive answer to whether Umm al-Fahem is a city became virtually irrelevant. Accordingly, new questions and meta-questions needed to be asked, new material needed to be revealed, new methods needed to be added, and a new conceptual framework needed to be developed.

The ethnographic experience made it clear that gaining a better understanding of the urban question cannot be divorced from structural, historical, social and political forces that shape the making of a city. These forces relate to two different but interconnected levels. Firstly, the nature and character of the state, its foundational structure, the citizenship it offers, its mode of governmentality, the relationship it has with its citizens, and the means through which it seeks to render them governable. Secondly, the social and political make up of the city itself, its history and the relationship it has with the state. Against this conclusion, the research developed to be simultaneously in and of the city. Umm al-Fahem became the subject and object of analysis. It is the subject which through its history and residents spoke about its socio-spatiality, materiality, semiotics, economy and culture, politics and future trajectories. It is the object of analysis in relation to analysing the Palestinian city under (post)colonial conditions and how historical, structural and political forces shape it.

The wealth of material that emerged in the field also generated urgent meta-questions about: what can be made of Palestinian cities inside Israel? What kinds of spatial configurations and arrangements are being formed and why? What kinds of socio-political and cultural orders are being formed and why? How does the city respond under (post)colonial conditions? And can there be a functional city and a fulfilment to the right to the city under (post)colonial conditions?

The new developments in the research meant that the initial methods of ethnography and photography were not enough to help provide conclusive satisfactory answers. Equally important was the pivotal role the new additional methods would offer in

dealing with methodological challenges pertaining to the production of objective knowledge based on qualitative ethnographic research, conducted in contested, politicised and multiple contexts (chapter 2). Therefore, excavating archival resources, official state statistics about, primarily but not solely, Umm al-Fahem's socio-economics, population and land, along with primary material from the Ministry of Interior in relation to planning regulations and master plans needed to be consulted. Moreover, historical, sociological, and discourse analysis needed to be employed.

Following on from this was my dedication to producing a thesis committed to the integrity of research in ways that reflected best the unfolding material without having to compromise field interviewees' experiences and perceptions of their city. Therefore, anchoring the research in one scholarly discipline or limiting literature to one school of thought would have impinged on the quality and integrity of the research, the objectives it sought to obtain and the scholarly contribution it aimed to make. As a result, the research had to be situated within multiple, inter and intra-disciplines that combined the historical, the sociological, the (post)colonial, the urban, the cultural and the political and the visual together.

The thesis had to be anchored in two theoretical foundations (chapter 3 and 4). Chapter three was a literature review that dealt with the urban question, citizenship and the state. It situated the Palestinian city in the wider contexts of what makes a city and addressed the meta-questions of why the city and why public space. It deconstructed the concepts of the city, public space and urbanity and their indispensable role in enhancing citizenship, democracy, politics, public life, culture and creativity. It also reviewed the changing meaning of cities and the increasing erosion of public space under neoliberalism and how attacks on the undesirables were

performed in and through space. Drawing on Frantz Fanon and Mahmood Mamdani, it discussed the colonial city and the urbanisation of black South Africans under colonialism. It concluded that regardless of the state's character and nature, whether capitalist, post-industrialist or colonial, urban and public space and the undesirables are perceived as threats that need to be fragmented and controlled.

The second foundational chapter was on Israel's colonial *nomos*. It provided an overview of structural and macro historical forces that shape the Palestinian city and citizenship and perpetuate their conditions (chapter 4). It discussed how Israel's "Jews only" inscriptions, rooted in its Zionist foundational ideology, are Manichaean and governed by an ethnic absolutist logic, and therefore are exclusionary-exclusive in character. It argued that such characteristic logic sets the conditions that doom Israel to never be a state of all its citizens, but a state that will always treat its Palestinian citizens as a problem that needs to be contained and governed, thus perpetuating their citizen-enemy suspended dialectic.

Before getting into Umm al-Fahem's contemporary transitional history starting from 1985 onwards, the thesis recognised the importance of writing a historical sociology of Umm al-Fahem (chapter 5) from 1949 when it was handed over to Israel up until 1985 when it was declared a city. The chapter formed part of the historical processes that shape the making of the city. Three main and interconnected themes were discussed. These were: the subject of governmentality and the way the state sought to render Umm al-Fahem and Fahmawis governable, Fahamwis' response to it, and Umm al-Fahem's materiality. It discussed how Umm al-Fahem's particular history of political activism, defiance and struggle for social and political justice generated anxieties amongst the establishment and turned it into a targeted village/city first by

the state and later by far right Zionist political groups as well. It traced its particularism back to the years between 1949-1966 when communist and nationalist activists refused to succumb to repressive controlling military regulations, demanding instead an end to both the military regime and the suspension of their citizenship, and a fulfilment of their rights.

The historical sociology chapter had three overall objectives. First, it aimed to show that Israel employed a mixture of technologies whose underlying objective was to control and produce domesticated, docile and fragmented Fahmawis. The technologies included direct military rule, co-option, favouritism, material incentives, criminalisation of political activists, direct intervention in local politics, as well as persistent negligence of urban infrastructure. The second objective was to help unravel the nature of the city and citizenship under (post)colonial conditions. The third objective was to situate the chapter as part of a holistic, one-unit thesis. As such, the chapter helped demonstrate the transition in the technologies of control that the state employed throughout Umm al-Fahem's history from 1949 onwards. It illustrated that the deployed technologies were not monotonous but diverse and in correspondence to operating local political and social forces. These technologies will be discussed below.

### **Empirical findings and conclusions: conceptualising the Palestinian city**

In the process of analysing the unfolding material of the research, answering its meta-questions, and verifying its arguments, I employed the Foucauldian concept of governmentality as the basis for analysing the Palestinian city in Israel. Governmentality was chosen because it accommodates within it complex

technologies of control which could be employed to shape the general conditions of everyday life and the conduct of people and their cities in this context. In unpacking the different technologies which make up governmentality, I came to a number of findings and reached a number of conclusions.

### **Absenting the city: suspension and uricide**

I found that absenting the Palestinian city, that is the deliberate absence and deprivation of the right to a functioning city and urbanisation, and the production instead of an ambiguous space, neither city nor village, a space that resides the betwixt and between and the suspended dialectic of inclusion-exclusion is the process which is at stake. In the suspended dialectics, the city acquires new functions and assumes new objectives. As demonstrated in the case of Umm al-Fahem, the city is reduced to the status of a hotel, hostel city, even a refugee camp (chapter 6). It is a dormitory and consumption site that serves mostly the rudimentary functions of eating, drinking, reproducing, consuming and worshipping.

It is a city that grows mainly due to natural reproduction. Its spatial borders are almost static. Its confined limited space suffers from a conspicuous shortage of neutral public spaces and job opportunities. The lack of industrial and commercial zones in the city and limited employability mean that the process of urbanisation, which forms an indispensable feature of cities, is almost non-existent and therefore the city's social fabric is homogenised. It is a cramped, concrete, and claustrophobic city that offers little or no space to be impersonal and has instead prolific controlling gazing eyes (chapter 6).

I called the absenting process urbicide. By urbicide I mean the killing of the city not by means of war which violently obliterates its physical existence, but by deliberately detaining and withholding its materiality: its socio-spatial and economic development. Slow violence, which is manifested in racialised land and spatial policies, under-budgeting, limited access to public resources and a perpetual state of dependency on the state and its Jewish cities and towns, is the operative technology to achieve this (chapter 6 and 7). Urbicide in other words became tantamount to the deprivation of the right to the city.

In relation to land and spatial policies, I found that a professional up-to-date master plan for the city, with suggested commercial and industrial zones, was prepared by the local government and put forward to the planning authorities, but was frustrated and declined (chapter 6). This proved that the wellbeing of the Fahmawis and their city's economic development were not a priority. The ramifications of this on the urbanity, socio-spatial and economic development of Umm al-Fahem and its residents have been far reaching.

Delays in approving master plans in a city with a distinctively young population (over 50 per cent below the age of 19) and increasing demands for housing, with hardly any public housing available and limited access to public land, meant that zoning is almost static. Therefore, citizens take a chance every time they build a house, commercial or light-industries premises. The operating interventionist, centralised and hierarchised planning system forces them to build illegally, or more to the point without authorisation. This leaves them living under a constant threat of demolition and in a state of perpetual precariousness and suspension.



Socially and in relation to the urban experience, the planning system combined with the private ownership of land, and self (private) - provision of housing, forces Fahmawis to act selfishly. Their priority is to secure housing, not give some of their land for public purposes, as stipulated by law. This also means that because of the hereditary land system, brothers and relatives end up living in close proximity. Consequently, the right to choose where to live and how to live is limited, even non-existent. This, inevitably, contributes to homogenisation, social conformism, and increases the gazing and controlling eye of society. People are expected to be accountable for their social actions and movements, and in some cases feel embarrassed not to do so, especially if the neighbour is a cousin, an uncle, or a brother.

The same system which does not approve a commercial zone in Umm al-Fahem in the name of planning regulations, allows Jewish development to take place under almost identical conditions. While development in zero distance from the artery road of Wadi Ara was not authorised and approved in the case of Umm al-Fahem, which is in desperate need for it, a bustling commercial zone in Gan Shmuel, a small kibbutz with less than a thousand people, 22.8 km southwest of Umm al-Fahem, was authorised in zero distance from the same road. This demonstrates the racialised Manichaean nature of the planning system: development for one side, and arrested or even de-development for the other. It reinforces the suspended existence of the Palestinians, the state of dependency, and demonstrates urbicide at work.

### **Religious identities: biopolitical hegemony**

As manifested in the case of Umm al-Fahem, when citizens and their leadership have what could be perceived as challenging politics, are aware of their citizenship rights, question the nominal status of their city, and demand their substantive fulfilment, and when suspension and urbicide were not enough to control the city and its citizens, the state resorted to additional (in)direct modes of governmentality. This time it sought to govern through incorporating the subjects into their own subjugation, or what the thesis called through control from within (chapter 7). Changing the political map of the city and its power configurations through the existing democratic structure of local elections was the way forward.

In Umm al-Fahem this was done through weakening the existing vocal, nationalist and left wing local government led by the communists who had been in office from the mid 1970s to 1989, and encouraging instead a religious movement whose prime concern was the moral and the social. From the state's perspective, a tamed religious movement, which had deep roots in society and is endorsed by the state, would help weaken popular nationalist politics and reduce subjects to their faith. Religious identities are also compatible with its fragmenting policies of divide and rule.

Exercising what could be qualified as slow violence, the state worked to render the communist local government incompetent, and unable to deliver the most basic of services. The materiality of the city was the prime theatre upon which this violence was to be exercised. Up until 1989, sewage flowed in Umm al-Fahem's already poor and inadequate roads and alleyways. Rubbish was left uncollected for days because of the shortage in rubbish collection vehicles and public rubbish bins. On the educational

front, the local government could not provide enough classrooms and other education facilities. At times it could not pay secondary school teachers and staff their monthly salaries, forcing them to go on strike on numerous occasions. It also could not pay its accumulated debts to the national water company which left the city's water cut off for days.

1989 was identified as the turning point in the history of the city, which had enduring effects on the socio-spatial and political landscape of the city. Umm al-Fahem in its local elections voted the Islamic Movement in with an overwhelming majority. The Islamic Movement had what could be considered as the right ingredients and mechanisms to secure its success and the right material conditions to facilitate its success. Already before running to office it exhibited organisational and leadership skills, and managed to build a successful record in offering welfare services and tap into residents' needs. Its fresh breath for change, commitment to improve the city's ailing and dysfunctional infrastructure and change its socio-spatial and cultural order, along with its relatively strong economic base allowed the Movement to accomplish many public projects, deliver services and transform Umm al-Fahem's cityscape, all within a relatively short period of time.

As discussed in chapter 7, the Movement embarked on biopolitical projects in the fields of education, public health, and body politics which were congruent with its ideology. Its projects favoured the family, society and their general wellbeing. It established numerous facilities and associations that allowed it to build strong civil society networks. It set up Islamic nurseries, *Daa'wa* College and circles, and offered extracurricular activities including physical education and Quranic teaching for school children. To meet the shortages in health services and address neglected social and

health issues, it set up an Islamic medical clinic that operated 24-hour and seven days a week, offering a highly subsidised service and free rehabilitation clinic for drug addicts.

In an attempt to actively engage with the public, the Movement initiated Islamic voluntary work brigades and health events. It offered free medical tests and delivered public seminars about preventable diseases and other health issues. It also encouraged residents to fulfil their agency and religious duty in keeping their city clean. By situating its ideological base at the centre of all its projects, activities and practices, the Movement managed to demonstrate how its slogan 'Islam is the solution' was the unequivocal panacea for all the ills of society.

Its performance, and 'talking the talk and walking the walk strategy' were enhanced by the state's change of policy towards the city. As soon as the Movement was elected in 1989, the state increased the local government budgets and wrote off all of its debts. It also allocated extra budget for development, and helped establish a department for strategic spatial planning. This, combined with the Movement's success and high performativity in managing the city, and its young and charismatic leadership, helped it establish a hegemonic rule, which I called, in a Foucauldian Gramscian spirit, biopolitical hegemony. The Islamic Movement has been repeatedly elected for the local government over the last 25 years.

Throughout its tenure, the Movement has managed to Islamise the socio-spatiality of the city. Dozens more mosques were built, and more women and young girls are wearing the *hijab*. It has also managed to change existing cultural practices and bring people's religious identities to prominence. In its beginnings, it even managed to

facilitate a situation in which it became uncomfortable for different ways of being and thinking to exist. Through introducing the *halal/haram* binary, communists and secular forces were denounced as infidels, and a few secondary school teachers associated with the Communist Party were dismissed. Folkloric cultural practices were denounced as *haram* and boycotted. Nationalist and secular events, once widely celebrated by Fahmawis, either changed form altogether or dwindled in size. Religious ceremonies and festivals, such ‘Al-Aqsa is in danger’ festival, gathered more prominence and attracted more people. Moreover, everyday colloquial and political references were taken over by religious references.

Against this backdrop, the thesis concludes that suspension, urbicide, religious identities and biopolitical hegemony are interconnected technologies of control that make up the governmentality project whose underlying objective is the management of Palestinians in ways that produce suspended, domesticated and fragmented cities and citizens. They are employed to shape the general conditions of everyday life, shape the materiality of the city, control the conduct of cities and citizens, perpetuate a state of dependency and deprive the Palestinians of their right to a functioning city. The thesis also concludes that Israel’s colonial Manichaean *nomos* that is governed by the logic of ethnic absolutism perpetuates Palestinians’ state of suspended dialectics of citizens-enemies, inclusion-exclusion, and forms the main obstacle to the fulfilment of the right to the city.

Although the macro structural foundations, that is Israel’s *nomos*, are systemic, and as such not unique to Umm al-Fahem, the thesis nonetheless recommends further research to be conducted on other Palestinian cities to help contribute to a more conclusive theory. Another related field that the thesis recommends would be

researching the question of whether a cosmopolitan city could exist under (post)colonial conditions.

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