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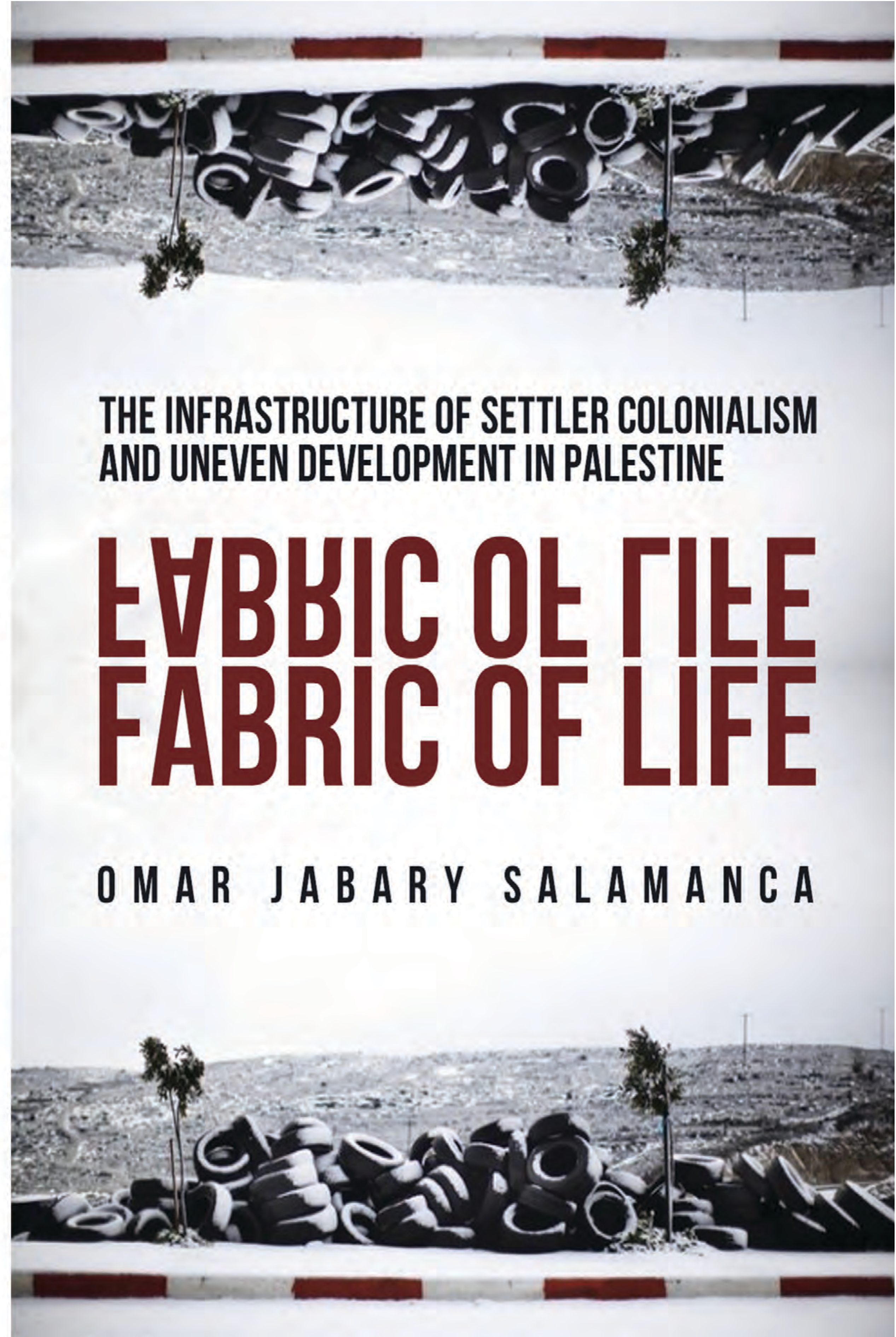
FABRIC OF LIFE THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF SETTLER COLONIALISM AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN PALESTINE OMAR JABARY SALAMANCA



Fabric of life

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The Infrastructure of Settler Colonialism and Uneven Development in Palestine

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Political and Social Sciences, option Political Sciences

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The photo on the cover of this book is by Marco Longari (AFP)

For mum, dad, and my brother because, for better or worse, you raised me to think I was capable of doing something like this.

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Summary

This dissertation aims to resurface and make visible infrastructure networks as concrete expressions of settler colonialism and uneven development. Focusing on contemporary Palestine, particularly in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, this thesis investigates the ways in which infrastructures come to matter socially, politically, economically and spatially both symbolically and as a set of materials. Drawing on the histories and geographies of road and electricity grids, *Fabric of Life* explores the ways these infrastructures are constructed, imagined and governed but also how they are experienced and contested. The research takes roads and electricity as object and subject of analysis and traces their role in shaping and producing space while also using them as window into understanding the various actors and 'larger' forces and structures that constitute these grids. An interdisciplinary analytical focus on the 'hardware' (e.g. wires) and 'software' (e.g. policies) aspects of infrastructures and their co-evolution with urban spaces and populations opens up critical perspectives on existing accounts of the political and economic geographies of Palestine. It offers a powerful way of thinking about these large socio-technical systems as a complex assemblage of actors, agents, policies and processes that connect to, and drive, much debated processes of settler colonialism, modernity, statecraft and uneven development. Concurrently, by providing an analytical study of infrastructures, the project generates new knowledge about and insight into the Palestinian case. In pursuing these themes, this thesis represents an attempt to resist and complicate dominant accounts of occupation and development in Palestine but also to make a vital contribution to a broader scholarship in critical urban studies and settler colonialism.

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Abbreviations

ACRI	Association for Civil Rights in Israel
ARIJ	Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem
AMA	Agreement on Movement and Access
BADIL	Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights
CCC	Consolidated Contractors Company
CEP	Center for Engineering and Planning
COHRE	Center on Housing Rights and Evictions
EBO	Effect-Based-Operation
FMEP	Foundation for Middle East Peace
GEDCO	Gaza Electricity Distribution Company
GOI	Government of Israel
HEPCO	Hebron Electric Power Company
HCJ	High Court of Justice (Israel)
ICAHD	Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IEC	Israeli Electricity Corporation
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
INP	Infrastructure Needs Project
JDEC	Jerusalem District Electricity Corporation
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency
LSM	Law in the Service of Man (later *Al-Haq*)
MERIP	Middle East Research and Information Project
NAD	Negotiations Affairs Department (PLO)
NEDCO	Northern Electricity Distribution Company
NIS	Israeli New Shekel (Feb 2014, 1 NIS = 0,21 euro = 0,29 US dollar)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSU	Negotiations Support Unit (PLO)
PA	Palestinian Authority
PEA	Palestinian Energy Authority
PEC	Palestinian Electric Company
PEDCAR	Palestinian Economic Council for Development & Construction
PITA	Palestinian Integrated Trade Arrangements
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRDP	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
SELCO	Southern Electricity Company

STW	Stop the Wall Campaign
UN	United Nations
UNCCP	United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade & Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
US	Unites States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

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In spite of a dissertation being ultimately a self-serving exercise, I hope to have offered a text that contributes to ongoing efforts to restore justice for Palestinians and their anti-colonial struggle, until return and liberation.

Omar Jabary Salamanca
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Context, theory and methods

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For the philosophy of praxis cannot be disjoined from thinking, man from nature, activity from material, subject from object; if one makes this detachment one falls into one of the many forms of religion or nonsensical abstraction.

– Antonio Gramsci, 1971

The past is always present, of course, in precarious and necessarily partial forms: it has material presence, as object and built form, as archive and text, and it also haunts the present as memory and even as absence. Because the past is always fragmentary, then, and because it casts such shadows over our own present, it needs to be constantly re-constructed and interrogated.

– Derek Gregory, 2011

ASSEMBLING THE FABRIC OF LIFE

For the thousands of Palestinians commuting daily between the northern and southern enclaves of the West Bank, there is only one possible route, which is via makeshift roads that bypass the city of Jerusalem. The main section of this ever-changing and precarious itinerary contours the eastern and mountainous boundaries of the capital cutting across the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Hizma, Anata and Ezzariya, weaving past the illegal Israeli settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev, Almon and Ma'ale Adumin, and eventually winding through Wadi Nar – Arabic for Valley of Fire—before reaching the city of Bethlehem. Wadi Nar is a steep and narrow two-lane track with no median that navigates up and down a canyon through tortuous and tight curves (see Figure 1). At the summit of this sneaky and remarkable passage there are staggering views of Jerusalem's old city across the Kidron valley on one side, and the rocky desert slopes leading to the Dead Sea on the other. The beauty of Wadi Nar contrasts however with the perils of the road as it flanks the valley's sharp rifts and abysses that defy every possible safety and engineering standard. The potholes and skid marks on the asphalt, the bended metal of the roadside barriers and the strong smell of burned rubber, are all evidence of the risks on a road where engines stall, breaks fail and where every year there are numerous fatal accidents. A ride through Wadi Nar is certainly enough to make one's hair stand on end.

It is not by choice, lack of development means or chance however that Palestinians use a road so tedious, costly and even life threatening.

Once a series of dirt tracks and footpaths, the Wadi Nar route was upgraded by the Israeli colonial administration in the early 1990s as an alternative to the more convenient Road 60—the historical north-south road linking major Palestinian cities with Jerusalem. Whereas the latter remained open to Jewish settlers it was declared off-limits to West Bankers in the wake of the Oslo agreements, a sign of the times to come. In effect, what initially began as an ostensibly temporary measure to regulate Palestinian access to and passage through Jerusalem soon became a permanent closure forcing West Bankers to the periphery of their capital. A fast and smooth trip that used to take about half an hour gradually turned into a costly and excruciating journey that today can take up to three hours. Over the years the Israeli authorities continuously adapt sections of this route for the relentless expansion of its colonial settlements, to accommodate the meticulous zigzags of the segregation wall, to expand the network of settler-only roads and, ultimately, to consolidate the annexation of this vital and strategic area. Turning this thoroughfare into the sole north-south transport corridor also enabled the Israeli state to regulate and obstruct all passing Palestinian traffic. This was accomplished with the help of the infamous Container Checkpoint, a military installation where Palestinians are randomly pulled over for inspection and subjected to insults, beatings, arrests, and access denials. Despite the road being undoubtedly a colonial ‘fact on the ground’, Wadi Nar was recently upgraded and improved by the Palestinian Authority (PA) with financial contribution from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). While conditions of the route have slightly improved, this act by the PA de-facto consolidated and legitimized continuing Israeli efforts at segregation and dispossession.

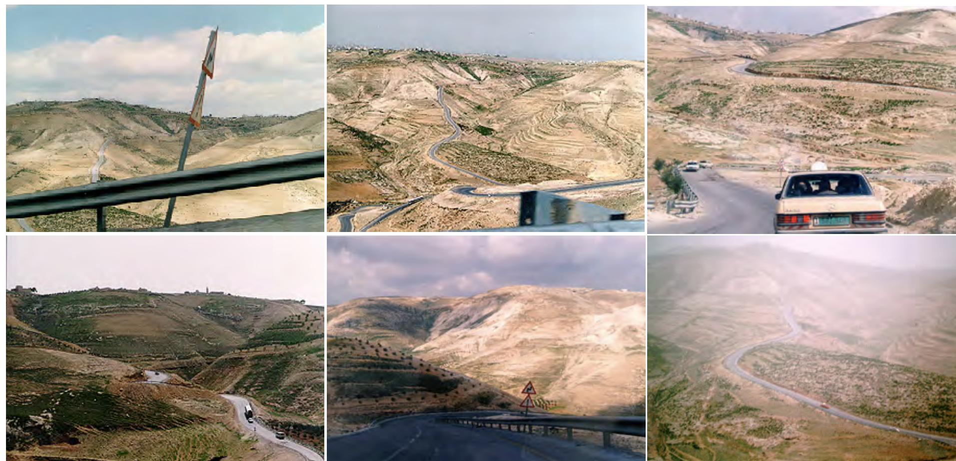

Figure 1**:** Wadi Nar Road, 1997 (Source: Nigel Parry)

Traveling Wadi Nar as it contours the occupied lands of East Jerusalem further illustrates how, like roads, building matter and infrastructure serve as politics by other means. Along the way one can hear and observe the frenetic noise and labour of Israeli Caterpillar bulldozers,

trucks, excavators and cranes as they erect electricity pylons and telecommunication towers in Pisgat Ze'ev, build portions of the wall around Hizma, lay water and sewage pipes in the outskirts of Ma'ale Adumin, and expand megalomaniac settlements, roads and bridges over Palestinian lands around Bethlehem. This vital landscape which features modern and monumental works of engineering stands in stark contrast to the frozen and crumbling built environment of the Palestinians, who are denied the possibility to build and upgrade infrastructure or connect to existing grids[1]. In fact, more elusive, on the edges of the motorway, there is a grim landscape dotted with demolished houses covered by corrugated iron and piles of rubble in Ezzariya, roads separated by a wall and closed with yellow fences and concrete blocks in Anata, sewage spilling from settlements over Wadi Nar and into Palestinian agricultural lands, fenced water mains inaccessible to the displaced Bedouins of Nkhella, Ghawaliya and Kasarat, and high voltage electricity wires that supply the settlement of Almon and a nearby military base but bisect and bypass Bedouin communities with no access to the power grid. The often-assumed banality of ribbons of asphalt, pipes and wires that crisscross familiar urban landscapes, here weighs in its social, political, economic and spatial significance.

In many ways the landscape emerging from this vignette conveys a sense of a malleable textile or fabric, as invoked in the title of this dissertation, whereby infrastructures appear as threads that seamlessly weave power, people and spaces together or apart; threads that create an intricate colonial fabric that lays bare the unequal tapestry of this twisted geography. Layered on top of, within and between the fabric of Palestinian space, these mundane networks effectively reinforce dominant configurations of political interest and power. Along their paths, roads, electricity, water and telecommunication infrastructure radically transform the political geography and redefine the conditions of possibility for collective life. For these networks bypass, exclude and provide opportunities for connection and choice, but also create (or deny) possibilities for life and offer powerful resources for its management and control. Like Wadi Nar, a road not only serves as a means to rearticulate geography in ways that facilitate the expansion of colonial settlements and segregate and deny West Bankers free, fast and convenient access to the once thriving city of Jerusalem. Pushing Palestinians away from their established routes also contributes to dislocating their fabric of life –that is the social and economic foundations through which goods reach the market, students their

[1] The Wadi Nar route mostly cuts across a territory known as Area C. This means, as stipulated in the Oslo agreements, that the Israeli Government is the one responsible for providing infrastructure and other essential services to the population under its control. Palestinians are not allowed to build, expand or to connect to existing grids –whether Palestinian or Israeli— without the permission of the military administration. Israel, as an occupying power, is legally

schools, patients to hospitals and families to their relatives' homes. The vignette, which offers a quintessentially political geography of colonial occupation, underscores how pipes, wires and ribbons of asphalt are not passive and stable foundations on which politics takes place but rather integral to the conduct of politics. This understanding however tells only a fraction of the story.

Indeed, infrastructures are not just material objects resultant from and drivers of uneven socio-political, economic and spatial processes. They are, most crucially, the relations contained within them, the actors that plan them, the law that legitimizes them, the discourses and imaginaries that shape them, the knowledge gone into their design, the resources and labour used to build them, the contested histories of their construction, the broader structural forces that shape them, and the ways in which they are experienced. Riding through Wadi Nar one might let the physical boundaries of the road demarcate its conceptual borders, its uses and meanings. Our experience and understanding of the road however is not inherent in this artefact; rather it emerges from a broader system of interrelations that constitutes 'the road'. The meanings of the road –the dark asphalt layers, the road signs, its topography—are as much part of the road assemblage as are the aggregate and bitumen that compose the asphalt, the checkpoints that disrupts its circulation, the contractors and subcontractors which build the road or the governmental agencies which, like the USAID and the PA, design, plan and fund the road. Wadi Nar is thus not a static material object but an ever-shifting assemblage that brings subjects and objects, people and things into mutually constitutive relations, all elements of this heterogeneous assemblage are collaborators. It is important not only to consider infrastructures as material outcomes but also as the process through which they materialize, their texturality, the ways in which these threads are knitted and assembled. Seeing infrastructure as fixed objects denies its fluid, co-evolving and malleable nature and deflects attention from an understanding of infrastructures as complex and far-reaching technologies that are embedded into broader frameworks. Infrastructures are not an inert 'backdrop to politics', but an object that is both produced by and productive of political, social, economic, cultural and spatial relations.

This understanding of infrastructure opens up a series of critical questions about the ways the fabric of life is constituted in Palestine. The first concerns what a focus on the development and governance of infrastructures reveals about settler colonialism and uneven development. From the brief description above, infrastructures appear as subjects and objects that shape a variety of geographies of dispossession. They play a complex and changing set of roles: they are objects of segregation, vehicles for colonization but they can also be

sites of neoliberal experimentation, expansion and regulation. Thus attending to infrastructures can provide insights into how the fabric of inequality, segregation and dispossession is produced. A second set of related questions revolves around the implications and ways of using infrastructure as a tool of analysis but also an 'archive' which when unpacked makes visible the layered assemblage of discourses and practices that justify, enable and characterize these networks. A third set of questions arises around issues of experiencing and contesting the fabric of life. In effect, what is the role that materiality plays in the constitution and experience of dispossession? How are development and governance experienced by Palestinians? How is the infrastructure of settler colonialism and uneven development contested and at times subverted?

In pursuing these themes and questions this dissertation aims to resurface and make visible infrastructure networks as concrete expressions of settler colonialism and uneven development. Focusing on contemporary Palestine, particularly in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, this thesis investigates the ways in which infrastructures come to matter socially, politically, economically and spatially both symbolically and as a set of materials. Drawing on the histories and geographies of road and electricity grids, the *Fabric of Life* explores the ways these infrastructures are constructed, imagined and governed but also how they are experienced and contested. The research takes roads and electricity as object and subject of analysis to trace its role in shaping and producing space but also as window into the various actors and 'larger' forces and structures that constitute these grids. An interdisciplinary analytical focus on the 'hardware' (i.e. wires and asphalt) and 'software' (i.e. policies and imaginaries) of infrastructures and their co-evolution with urban spaces and populations opens up critical perspectives to existing accounts on the political and economic geographies of Palestine. It offers a powerful way of thinking about these large socio-technical systems as a complex assemblage of actors, agents, policies and processes that connect to, and drive, much debated processes of colonialism, modernity, statecraft and uneven development. Concurrently, by providing an analysis of infrastructures, the project generates new knowledge about and insight into the Palestinian context. This thesis represents thus an attempt to resist and complicate existing accounts about occupation and development in Palestine and also makes a vital contribution to a broader scholarship on critical urban studies and settler colonialism. Ultimately the dissertation writes an account of Palestine out of the material histories and geographies of infrastructures, for an understanding of Palestine necessarily goes hand in hand with an understanding of the material histories and geographies of settler colonialism and uneven development.

The next part of this introduction, "The materiality of settler colonialism and uneven development", lays out the theoretical perspectives, ideas and vocabularies that inform the dissertation. It does so alongside introductory reflections on infrastructure as considered in Palestine studies. However, as Timothy Mitchell suggests, ultimately "the theory lies in the complexity of the cases" and this introduction therefore "offers no substitute for what lies in the chapters themselves"(2002:8). The literature review is followed by the section, "Seeing through infrastructure", which advances the broader aims and specific claims of the dissertation. Following, the conceptual, empirical and research practice are brought together to introduce the empirical work included in the subsequent chapters, and in doing so it puts infrastructures networks to work. The introduction concludes with a brief overview of the chapters.

THE MATERIALITY OF SETTLER COLONIALISM AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

During the last two decades a number of historians have sought to write 'comprehensive' Palestinian histories and histories of Palestine. In these accounts infrastructures such as road, railway or water networks have often been mentioned in passing and depicted as passive objects subjected to acts of sabotage (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003), as networks of imperial expansion (Khalidi, 1991), or tools of economic empowerment/disempowerment (Pappé, 2011). Other accounts of Palestine focusing on the British mandate period have portrayed infrastructures as icons of colonial modernity (Norris, 2013) or artifacts of technocratic planning (El-Eini, 2004). In this literature, infrastructures are often scripted as a derivative of history. Hence infrastructures are largely marginal and feature as residues of different historical–political processes. These works overlooked the fact that infrastructures have been, since the early days of the British Mandate and Israel's settler colonial project, a crucial site of contestation and a key factor in determining the history of the region (Jean Smith, 1993).[2] In contrast, a proliferating, if somewhat disparate, geographical literature that mostly focuses on the occupied territories –the West Bank and the Gaza Strip— has been more attuned to the vital role that networked infrastructures play in shaping Palestinian politics and space. To a large extent this attention has grown in parallel to the increasing visibility and volume of the materiality of settler colonialism in the aftermath of the Oslo agreements –from the extension of settlements and bypass roads to the checkpoints and the wall.

[2] An exception to this is Ronen Shamir's recent book 'Current Flow. The electrification of Palestine' (2013)

This recent work is largely concerned with geopolitics, and making visible the relationship between infrastructure and state power articulated at the scale of the nation-state. Infrastructure networks are described as a source of connection, but also as a means of disconnection, discrimination and control (Parker, 1999; Halper, 2000; Yiftachel and Ghanem, 2004; Falah, 2005; Gordon, 2008). Some authors note how infrastructures have been reconceptualized and redesigned from their original and purely utilitarian purpose into political and symbolic tools of an ethno-national project (Azaryahu, 2001; Efrat, 2006; Yiftachel, 2006; Pullan et al, 2007). Others equally emphasize the importance of infrastructures as governmental and biopolitical tools (Parsons and Salter, 2008; Hanafi, 2009). Moreover, Israel's policies of infrastructure disruption through bureaucracies of occupation, as well as destruction by military means, have been described as a way of 'de-development' (Roy, 1995) or 'forced de-modernization' (Graham, 2002) of Palestinian society. Among this literature, significant attention has been devoted to the politics of water (as a resource rather than infrastructure) and the ways it is used as a tactic of control, domination and dispossession (Trottier, 1999; Selby, 2003; Zeitoun, 2008). Finally, some studies have recently pointed out the increasing privatization and commodification of infrastructure and natural resources (Clarno, 2008; Khalidi and Samour, 2011; Bond, 2011; Hanieh, 2013). To be clear, much of this literature builds on earlier work on the urban politics of occupation, which focused on land and the mechanisms, bureaucracies and impacts of colonial planning. This research includes scholarly accounts (Falah, 1989, 1995, 2003; Coon, 1990; Khamaisi, 1997; Abdulhadi, 1990) but also a broad range of studies from research institutions and political human rights organizations such as the West Bank Data Base Project and Al-Haq that documented, in qualitative and quantitative terms, the political nature and impacts of Israeli efforts at infrastructure construction, destruction and disruption (Benvenisti and Khayat, 1987; Shehadeh et al, 1984).

Powerful though these contributions are, most tend to treat infrastructure as closed, static and materially constant artifacts that function as a backdrop to social relations, a determinant of social transformation, or a thing on which to hang arguments and claims to illustrate other discourses and processes. In fact, infrastructures are rarely the departure point or an object of analysis in its own right but rather one among many elements that constitutes a broader 'matrix of control', to use Jeff Halper's expression. Paraphrasing Chris Otter, most of these accounts relegate infrastructure "to a limited repertoire of stock roles: background, outcome, medium, obstacle, text, symbol, determinant" (2013:53). As such, material infrastructures "became an external environment with which analytically interesting action took place" (idem). In other words, infrastructure (as technology) is

something "kept external to the explanatory model and accounts for everything else that the model cannot explain" (Mitchell, 2013). In fact, within what we can call Palestine studies there is a tendency to take infrastructures literally as 'facts on the ground' whereas the most crucial question remains how these facts actually become so, or how facts become grounded? When considering the former rather than the latter, the nature of material politics becomes reduced to picturing a *tableau* of infrastructures that denies the vitality and life of 'things'. This approach risks eliding the broader context, actors, experiences, discourses, forces, and genealogies of material technologies –such as roads or electricity— and the ways these can be turned into actual forms of political, social and economic power (cf. Mitchell, 2002; Tolia-Kelly, 2013). As such, studies on Palestine have thus missed crucial aspects of infrastructure.[3]

However, one must note the number of recent and compelling accounts with material sensibility to infrastructures. A notable example here is the work of Eyal Weizman (2004, 2012), often described as an incisive critique of colonial occupation, political violence, and the militarization of planning and architecture in the occupied Palestinian territories. A less common reading of his research is one that considers the ways in which this work explores matter (architecture, roads, the wall, checkpoints, etc.), not only as an imprint of politics, broader relations and time but also as itself an agent within the Palestinian settler colonial setting. Indeed rather than taking the road, the wall or a checkpoint for what they are, Weizman explores 'things' as elements of a larger assemblage from which they are a part. The central question, as he puts it, is thus "how to actually tease out of those things the politics and history that are saturated in them" (2011).[4] Yet, as he warns, "reading it by ferociously investigating the materiality itself is not always sufficient. You have to look at the networks of relations and power relations in which objects are circulating and existing" (Idem).[5] Equally stimulating work on materiality, from a science and technology perspective, is the research of Samer Alatout on the ontologies and materialities of water and its varied enactments in different sociotechnical assemblages (Alatout, 2009; Barnes and Alatout, 2012). In line with these studies but

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[3] Recently this trend is being reversed through work that focuses explicitly on infrastructure networks such as studies on telecommunications (Aouragh, 2011; Tawil-Souri, 2012; Junka-Aikio, 2012); water (Signoles, 2010; Alatout, 2009; Barnes and Alatout, 2012); sewage (Stamatopoulou-Robbins, 2014) and electricity (Shamir, 2013).

[4] See also interview with Eyal Weizman on 'Political Plastic' in Collapse magazine (2010) http://roundtable.kein.org/sites/newtable.kein.org/files/weizman_political%20plastic.pdf

[5] This Latourian approach, heavily inspired by readings of Deluzee and Guattari, has also informed Weizman's more recent work on Forensic Architecture. In this work, if assemblage is the descriptor then forensic is the term given to the operation of doing assemblages. In his book, Weizman provides a fascinating reading of how legal questions such as 'proportionality' materialize in concrete spatial and architectural forms. But also, how objects such as architectural models, the built environment and urban ruins have the potential to determine and configure legal calculations through a humanitarian register. For a more detailed account of Weizman's research on Forensic Architecture see Omar Jabary Salamanca's book review of The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza (2013)

departing from the science and practice of archeology, Nadia Abu El-Haj's (2001) groundbreaking work explores how specific ideologies and practices become material and spatial. Also, Sandra Sufian (2007) offers an excellent material history of malaria control in Palestine under the British Mandate. Yet, from a different perspective, Sigrid Vertommen (2014a; 2014b) offers a compelling account about the materiality of in vitro fertilization and egg donation and the political economy of assisted reproduction.

This attention to the material and the techno-political, which is gradually gaining ground in Palestine and Middle East studies, has been influenced to a certain extent by the work of Timothy Mitchell (1991, 2002, 2011) on colonization, techno-politics and political economy in Egypt, and on the geographies of oil and democracy in Iraq. Mitchell has indeed influenced a growing number of scholars that are looking more closely at the technical aspects of processes of colonialism, statecraft and development. The work of Christopher Parker on the neoliberal modalities of development and government in Jordan and Iraq is significant in this regard (see Moore and Parker, 2007; Parker 2009; Parker and Debruyne, 2011).[6] Taking seriously the technical and material side of 'things' not only challenges mainstream accounts of Arab political life that go beyond traditional theories of transition in the Middle East. It also opens up the possibility of seeing materiality in ways that avoid certain kinds of technical determinism while enabling a study of material infrastructures on their own terms.

It is in the spirit of this work that this dissertation wishes to make a contribution by engaging with three broad but related bodies of literature. The first one is concerned with critical urban studies and the geographies of matter/materiality. This scholarship is crucial to pinpoint the different ways in which infrastructures have been studied but also to understanding the complex and socio-material nature of infrastructure. This literature offers a fundamental reading of infrastructure as material artifacts that complements, expands and deepens the insights from infrastructure accounts in the Palestinian context. A second body of literature includes insights from critical urban geography literature on the role of infrastructure in the context of political economy shifts driven by the advance and consolidation of neoliberal capitalism and uneven forms of development more broadly. Finally, the literature review considers the relevance of settler colonial studies not only to understand the production of settler and native

[6] See also forthcoming work by Laleh Khalili (2014) on the emergence of US military logistics and infrastructures in the Middle East; Nasser Abourahme's research (2014) on refugee camps as material assemblages that bring subjects and objects, people and things into mutually constitutive relations; and research by Nida Alahmad (2014) on the relationship between knowledge production and political engineering in Iraq's contemporary state and nation-building projects. Also relevant here is recent work on urban politics in Morocco (Zemni and Bogaert, 2011; Bogaert, 2011) and Jordan (Debruyne, 2013).

space but also to situate the Palestinian case in its context. Drawing upon these different theoretical perspectives deepens these problematizations while providing an anchor to the literature on Palestine studies that is rather underserved in terms of understanding the relations between infrastructure, power and space, let alone bringing infrastructures together with settler colonial and political economic frameworks. As such, the analytical framework deployed in this thesis seeks to show how a grounded study of material things, with a spatial sensibility, provides invaluable openings for research into Palestine, and more specifically, into the historical processes and formations of settler colonialism and uneven development in ways that avoid losing sight of their constitution and relational nature.

Locating infrastructure: materiality, power and space

This research draws first and foremost upon a recent and renewed scholarly fascination for exploring material things in the social sciences – from social studies of technology, urban studies and political ecology to urban anthropology and political theory. A particular focus of these studies has been infrastructure, the vital physical and technological networks that infuse, underpin, sustain and constitute cities and urban life more broadly. Typically remarked upon when they fail to work properly, infrastructures –such as electricity, telephone, water, sewage and heating systems—have often been seen as objects of technical and economic value, but empty of socio-political meaning. Yet these vast networks comprise the architecture for urban circulation. They are the arteries that infuse life into the urban world "literally providing the undergirding of modern societies" (Larkin, 2013:328). As such, infrastructures are material forms that enable the possibility of exchange of goods, ideas, power, people, and finance across space. By linking different scales, bodies and spaces they form and co-constitute the material foundation of modern societies. As Michael Edwards argues, "to be modern is to live within and by means of infrastructures, and therefore to inhabit, uneasily, the intersection of these multiple scales" (Edwards, 2004:186). These networks are indeed intrinsic to shaping cultures of urban modernity and mobility, what Raymond Williams labeled the 'structures of feeling' of modern urban life (Williams, 1973). No longer can we think of material artifacts such as pipes, wires, and roads as the passive and stable foundation on which other processes takes place; rather, it is argued, these objects should be considered as large socio-technical systems that are involved in the social and political production and reconfiguration of urban space and experiences of urban life (Graham and Marvin, 2001). As Colin McFarlane and Jonathan Rutherford argue, "infrastructures are central to the construction of material urban worlds, a site of capitalist production and expansion, constitutive of social relations of inequality,

and a space of environmental transformation" (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008:363).

The profusion of urban infrastructure studies includes, for instance, work on the histories of 'social construction' and socio-political transformations wrought by infrastructure networks (Hughes, 1983; Melosi, 2000); how infrastructure shape and is shaped by the condition of 'modernity' (Swyngedouw, 1998; Edwards, 2003; Kaika, 2004); how these networked technologies express and are constituted by relations of social power (Gandy, 2004; Loftus, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2004); the actual bodily encounter between the technologies of state infrastructure and the subjects of that state power (Kooy and Bakker, 2008; McFarlane, 2008); infrastructure as targets of destruction and/or means of violence (Graham, 2002; 2008; Coward, 2006; Rodgers and O'Neill, 2012); the fragility of modern infrastructures (Graham, 2010; Soppelsa, 2009); the everydayness of infrastructures and social relations as infrastructure (De Boeck and Plissart, 2004; Simone, 2009; Elyachar, 2010); the role infrastructure plays as mediator of human activities (Star, 1999, 2002); the unpredictable and unintended effects of technological assemblages and the enactment of politics through technological systems (Mitchell, 2002; Hecht, 2009); infrastructure as material forms of ideology (Humphrey, 2003, 2005); the intransigence of material infrastructures in shaping pathways of change (Collier, 2011); infrastructures as sites of unbundling, capitalist deregulation, and splintering urbanism (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Bond and McInnes, 2007; McDonald and Ruiters, 2012); and the role of international development in rendering problems of infrastructure inequality into technocratic (and thus de-politicized) interventions amenable to programs of improvement (Ferguson, 1990; Mitchell, 2002; Li, 2007).

This rich theoretical and empirical body of literature has opened up the 'black box' of networked infrastructure to explore the ways in which infrastructures are shaped and closely bound up with wider socio-technical, socio-natural, political, economic and cultural complexes that have contingent effects in different places and at different times. It highlights the ways infrastructure, space and population are mutually imbricated and inseparable from particular geometries of power to govern populations and shape uneven spatial configurations of infrastructure provision (Graham and Marvin, 2001). Indeed, implicit in much of this work is a clear appreciation of how power circulates through infrastructural landscapes in dispersed and taken for granted fashion and the ways infrastructures are and become political (Ekers and Loftus, 2008). This scholarship has been thus crucial in addressing the problem of traditional accounts of infrastructures –including urban sociology, Marxist urban studies, cultural theory and social construction of technology (SCOT)— that consider these networks as "material things

[...] functioning as either an uninteresting backdrop for social relations, or, periodically, a brute determinant of social transformation” (Otter, 2013:40). This misreading of infrastructure, as Graham and Marvin argue, has largely been a result of the traditional inertia of disciplinary boundaries, narrow versions of technological determinism that see infrastructure as unproblematic, and the often taken for granted nature of what was seen as ‘boring things’ (2001:34). This, the authors continue, has largely reinforced the neglect of infrastructure and undermined the understanding of a subject that necessarily demands an interdisciplinary starting point and a profoundly complex view on the role and significance of these technological artifacts (idem). In many ways, this shift has opened up a necessary space for interdisciplinary dialogue on work concerned with the urban/built environment, a turn which offers the potential for reassessing approaches to studying the urban past and for experimenting with fresh methodologies that account for the material histories and geographies of infrastructures.

Water, which has been at the center of inquiry in this renewed attention to the material particularly among urban geographers, provides a good illustration of the sophistication of these analyses and the possibilities offered by taking infrastructures seriously. In the words of Ekers and Loftus, the traditional concern of geographers to “understand how water, power and politics are woven together has been bolstered with a historical geographical materialist approach and attempts to ground political ecology more firmly in a nuanced political economy” (2008:701). Eric Swyngedouw’ ‘Social Power and the Urbanization of Water’ (2004) is a good example of this. In this book he reconstructs the circuits of water in Guayaquil (Ecuador) to show the power relations that infuse the metabolic transformation of water as it is urbanized. From a different angle, Maria Kaika’s work traces the historical geography of water to show the intricate relations of nature and the urban as well as the shifting relations and meaning of water infrastructure and modernity (Kaika and Swyngedouw, 2002; Kaika, 2005). Other authors have explored, through historical accounts, the connections between water, urban metabolism and political subjectivities of the bacteriological and contaminated city (Gandy, 2004; McFarlane, 2008). Adopting a more micro-perspective, recent work has productively explored different arrangements of waters and social relations and how are these regulated, controlled and mediated by particular technologies (Loftus, 2006; Furlong, 2010; Sultana, 2013). Equally relevant are the more abundant studies on the marketization and commodification of water infrastructure and its implications on the polarization of service provision and processes of splintering urbanism (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Bakker, 2003; 2005).

Whereas water has featured prominently in urban studies about infrastructure, research about electricity has been hitherto under-theorized and empirically under-studied in these accounts.[7] This is surprising considering the (implicit) influence in these accounts of Thomas Hughes's seminal work on the sociopolitical histories of electrification in Western societies (1983, 1987) –a key reference for studies on SCOT from which these accounts take cue. Indeed, as Rutherford and Coutard recently put it in the editorial of a special issue on urban energy transitions, despite the importance of "energy production, distribution flows, management and use to nearly all aspects of urban functioning and urban metabolism, it remains highly surprising the extent to which this has, until recently, been under-researched in the urban studies field" (2014:1357). The study of roads is equally absent from the geography literature notwithstanding the recognition by influential Marxist theorists such as Henri Lefebvre (1991) and David Harvey (1990) of the crucial role that roads have played for late capitalism's urban growth and sprawl or how these networks constitute forms of domination and environmental degradation.[8]As Dalakoglou has noted, after the Second World War development and modernization were seen as a process that required "the hard surfaced, modernist lineal highway aesthetics to extend the built environment and surface 'natural' landscapes with these tangible proofs of technological advancement" (2012:573). Roads can indeed be considered as "the paradigmatic material infrastructure of the twenty-first century, supporting both the information society (in the ever increasing circulation of commodified goods and labor) and the extractive economies of developing nations on which the production and reproduction of such goods and labor depends" (Dalakoglou and Harvey, 2012:459).

For clarity, the analytic underpinning of most of these accounts relies on a sensibility to and engagement with the material/materiality which carries with it a significant ontological and epistemological shift. Indeed, in these theoretical and empirical studies of infrastructure there is an implicit or explicit confrontation with what Bruno Latour calls the 'modernist settlement', that is the strict separation of the natural and

[7] Whereas recent work on urban studies has paid attention to electricity from an energy transition perspective (see Monstadt, 2007; Coutard and Rotherford, 2010) little has been done with regards to the political ecological dimensions shaping electricity networks and their current transformation. Some recent exceptions include the work of Conor Harrison (2013), Eric Verdeil (2009, 2011, 2013) Jonathan Silver (2013) and Idalina Baptista (2013) among others.

[8] In the field of urban anthropology, there has been growing scholarly attention to the crucial socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of roads. This notably includes two recent special issues dedicated to ethnographies of the road. The first one, edited by Dimitris Dalakoglou and Penny Harvey, appeared in the journal Mobiliites under the title "Roads and Anthropology: Ethnographic Perspectives on Space, Time and (Im)Mobility" (2012). The second, edited by Gabriel Klaegher, appeared in the Journal of the International African Institute as "The Perils and possibilities of African Roads" (2013).

the social, the human and the non-human, the material and the cultural, language and reality, divisions that are all predicated on the immaterial/material dichotomy that provides the foundation for modernist thought (1999). This socio-material perspective assumes that societies have always been contingent and relational entanglements of social and material, technical and natural ‘things’. The social and the material are thus intrinsically related, as “there is no social that is not also material, and no material that is not also social” (Orlikowski, 2007:1437). In other words, as Bakker and Bridge put it, the invocation of the concept of materiality in accounts about infrastructure “is an acknowledgement that ‘things’ [roads, wires, pumps, etc.], which make a difference for the way social relations unfold, are not merely pre-given substrates that enable and constrain social action; rather, they are themselves historically and geographically produced in a way that is simultaneously socio-natural and socio-technical” (2006:18). Infrastructures (as socio-materiality) can thus be seen as things that mediate between macro-structures and everyday life or, as McFarlane (2011) recently put it, as materialities that ‘hard-wire experience’. In this sense, “rather than relegating materiality to the margins of the social world or including objects as mere passive receptacles of human action”, the attempt is one to “reconceptualize the role and agency of objects in the production of reality” (Aradau, 2010:493). It is important to note however that the question of materiality far exceeds any invocation of ‘concrete’ or ‘physicality’ (Anderson and Wylie, 2009).

The drive to study infrastructure as socio-materiality in urban studies comes in many (post-structural) forms. Yet a significant portion of this literature takes its cue from either one or a combination of socio-technical studies (Bijker et al. 2012), cyborgian perspectives (Haraway, 1985; Haraway and Teubner, 1991), non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008), relational theories of space (Murdoch, 2005; Massey, 2005) and actor network theory (Callon, 1990; Latour, 2005). The latter approach in particular has recently gained increasing attention and has been brought to bear on the field of urban studies in provocative and productive ways in what has become known as ‘assemblage urbanism’ (Farías, 2010; McFarlane, 2011). The term assemblage, which derives from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and the influential take by Latour and other scholars such as Michel Callon, John Law and Manuel De Landa, refers to the immanent effect of the association of heterogeneous elements such as humans, organizations, tools, objects, technologies, texts, organisms, etc. (Latour, 2005); assemblages are never fixed or stable, but always in a process of making or unmaking. As urban theory, assemblage is “primarily focused upon socio-material transformation and asks how ‘things’ [such as infrastructure] are assembled, and how they might be disassembled or reassembled” (Brenner et al. 2011:122). In this way assemblage “highlights processes

of composition and recognizes diverse forms of human and nonhuman agencies—while striving to avoid reification, reductionism and essentialism" (McFarlane, 2011:652). Yet, as McFarlane argues, assemblage "does not separate out the cultural, material, political, economic, and ecological, but seeks to attend to why and how multiple bits-and-pieces accrete and align over time to enable particular forms of urbanism over others in ways that cut across these domains, and which can be subject to disassembly and reassembly through unequal relations of power and resource" (2011:4). In this necessarily empirical reading of the socio-material an electricity grid for example becomes a heterogeneous assemblage of wires, meters, technicians, institutions, policies and so forth, and because of the assemblages in which it finds itself it can become, at different moments in time, a border, a resource for generation, a means for governing the population, a foundation for colonialism, a means of national building and a material linkage between past and present, or a site for contestation and political possibility.

Because urban assemblages risks, at least in the more strictly Latourean versions, create a superficial reading of materiality that ends up as a depoliticized exercise in "surface collages, and graceful descriptions of things, places, surfaces and representations" (Tolia-Kelly, 2013:157), it is imperative to attend to and engage with a historicized and theoretical account of the politics, grammars, labor, and productive power of these materials. Otherwise, as Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (2013) suggests this reading might end up producing surface rather than topological geographies of infrastructures. Indeed, such scholarship can overlook the 'political and politicized nature of technological assemblages' (Graham, 2009:204). In other words, as David Madden put it in the review of the book Urban Assemblages: "with too much ANT, critical urban studies would be impossible" (2010:588). To avoid the 'flat ontologies' of a symmetric reading of agency among a variety of things, as in the original accounts of ANT, material agency and effects must be situated within a larger politico-economic narrative (Brenner et al, 2011; Otter, 2013). This is the case of Graham and Marvin's book on *Splintering Urbanism*, which has greatly influenced this research. Indeed, as Thomas Bender notes, *Splintering Urbanism* "was undertaken with ANT firmly in mind, and it does provide an example of ANT in action. With a focus on infrastructure, this book brings together a whole range of networks, processes and actors in order to show the inextricable connections of networks in multiple realms, from economy to politics to engineering, to various aspects of the natural world, to the build environment and more. Again, this book is grounded upon a system, the infrastructural system, something planned as a system, but it reaches toward an important conception and critique of the contemporary neoliberal metropolis. It provides an example showing that grounding an ANT

study of the city on basic infrastructural systems enables a metropolitan-wide and intensive examination of the metropolis, and it mounts a powerful political critique. The book would have been different and surely not as well integrated without the deployment of ANT thinking." (Bender, 2010:308).

The political economies and (uneven) geographies of infrastructure development

This dissertation also draws from literature on the spatial political economies of contemporary capitalism, and specifically from critical geography studies that interrogate the role of the built environment and infrastructure in the context of political economy shifts driven by the advance and consolidation of neoliberal capitalism (Harvey, 1982; Swyngedouw, 1992; Brenner, 1998; Smith, 2008). If as we have seen above infrastructure forms the socio-material basis for modern urban living, from this perspective infrastructures are also considered to be central to the economic and geographical production, reproduction and legitimation of modern capitalism. As Graham and Marvin contend, "the production of infrastructure networks, and the financial, engineering and governance practices that support them, are necessarily embedded within the broader power relations of global capitalism" (2001:190). Indeed, according to David Harvey, one of the multiple ways in which the development of capitalism addresses its inherent tensions and contradictions (see crisis) is by following a strategy of 'spatial and temporal fix', that is capital's tendency for geographical expansion and restructuring. As such, capitalism has to fix space – in transport and communication networks, water and electricity supplies, roads and other physical and immovable infrastructure—in order to survive, expand and overcome space (Harvey, 2001). [9] In this sense, infrastructures and innovations in transport and communication technologies are seen as a precondition for capitalism in so far as these networks link multiple spaces and times together as well as make it possible to reduce the spatial barriers and accelerate the movement of commodities, people, information and ideas over space (idem). Thus, "as capital that is literally 'sunk' and embedded within and between the fabric of cities", these built spaces of circulation, flow and mobility not only represent "long-term accumulations of finance, technology, know-how, and organisational and geopolitical power" (Graham and Marvin, 2001:12), they "underpin the territorial configurations of capitalism" (Harvey, 1995:3).

[9] For a more detailed account see Harvey (1982) and also Bob Jessop's 'Spatial fixes, temporal fixes, and spatio-temporal fixes', in N. Castree and D. Gregory, eds, *David Harvey: a Critical Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 142-66, 2006.

Because of the centrality of infrastructure to the reproduction of capitalism, increasing scholarly attention has been given to the ways ongoing processes of neoliberal globalization are reconfiguring the production and governance of these networks–from water and roads to telecommunications and electricity (see Graham and Marvin, 2001; Bakker, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2004; McDonald, 2012). If traditionally these sectors were run by public utilities as monopolies and assumed to be subject to market failure, for the past two decades infrastructure services have been increasingly driven by a logic of internationalization, liberalization and privatization. These developments have turned the so-called 'infrastructural ideal' (characteristic of the industrialized north) on its head, redrawing the infrastructure landscape in ways that have crucial implications. As Graham and Marvin argue, the 'unbundling' of infrastructure has lead to "the opening up of public infrastructure to private investment, and increasing the freedom of private capital to develop limited, customized infrastructures in specific spaces, without worrying about the need to cross-subsidize networks in less favored zones" (2002:198). This has, in turn, forced a pattern of 'splintering urbanism' whereby urban spaces and territory are becoming increasingly differentiated (idem). Moreover, this has meant a radical transformation of "the range of infrastructure services available, the economic organization of infrastructure provision, and the forms of state regulation in infrastructure systems" (Mondstat and Naumann, 2005:5). Indeed, numerous scholars pay scrupulous attention not only to the diverse neoliberal governance forms of infrastructure–from direct privatization, to commercialization and corporatization—but also to its social, political, economic and environment impacts (McDonald and Ruiters, 2005; Graham and Marvin, 2001; Bakker, 2003; Bond, 2007).

The privatization and commercialization of infrastructure certainly constitutes an act of enclosure that has increasingly exacerbated inequalities based on class, gender and race. As has been well noted in the literature, the introduction of neoliberal market principles has forced the transfer of publicly owned services to the private sector, the reduction or elimination of subsidies for the poor, the prioritization of economic efficiency over social equity, the preoccupation with full cost recovery, and in many cases, an increase in rates and service cut-offs (Harvey, 2003; McDonald and Ruiters, 2005; Swyngedouw 2005; Loftus, 2006; Roberts; 2008).[10] A fundamental caveat here however is that the shifting political economies of infrastructure have, in different places, been driven and led by distinct historically, geographically and socially specific transformations and have resulted in different outcomes (Bakker and Hemson 2000; Collier, 2011; Coutard, 2008; Kooy and

[10] It is important to note here accounts that have highlighted how the commercialization of basic services have often been challenged across the globe turning infrastructures into vital sites of contestation (Smith and Vawda, 2003; Loftus, 2006; Bond and Dugard, 2008).

Bakker, 2008). This is particularly relevant when taking into consideration cases from the Global South, for lack of a better term. For instances, as Michelle Kooy and Bakker have argued, the splintering of infrastructure in Jakarta is not a recent phenomenon exacerbated by neoliberal strategies of infrastructure governance but rather, the outcome of a long and entrenched legacy of colonial practices of exclusion and racialization (2008). Two lessons can be learned from this and similar accounts (see Coutard, 2008; Lawhon et al, 2014). On the one hand, to fully comprehend infrastructure transformations one must historicize and consider the political continuities and discontinues that inform the political economies of these vast socio-technical systems (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008). And, on the other, that universal claims about infrastructures, which emerge mostly from a Euro-American context, need to take into consideration a broader range of cases and perspectives. Again, as McFarlane and Rutherford put it, studies of infrastructure need to be 'provincialized' for more situated and subjective understandings of these socio-material networks (2008; see also Robinson, 2002, 2006, 2011).

In this respect, it is important to note how in the Global South the neoliberal reform of infrastructures has often been mediated by financialized forms of aid –implicated in a broad set of discursive and material practices—and enforced through international development agencies (e.g. World Bank or International Monetary Fund) that wield enormous financial and ideological clout. As many authors have argued, infrastructures are a major site where state practices converge with the global economy and processes of 'development' (see Ferguson 1999; Harvey 1989; Sassen 2001; Tsing 2005; Ong 2006). Indeed, the importance of infrastructure networks in processes of development in much of the Global South has been persistently celebrated in the mainstream academic and policy literature. In these accounts, infrastructure has long become ubiquitous in discussions of development, "a synonym for prerequisite, a way to label all those things lacking in the underdeveloped world—that is, everything separating the state of underdevelopment from that of modernity" (Rankin, 2009:70). This linear relation between infrastructure development and economic growth becomes more conspicuous in the literature focusing on so called conflict-afflicted scenarios, which are characterized by a legacy of damaged, neglected and uneven access to physical infrastructure. The success of 'post-conflict' stabilization and development aid efforts in these contexts is predicated not only on principles of liberal democracy and market-oriented economics but also on rebuilding the indigenous institutional and infrastructural capacity (Duffield 1998; Barakat, 2005). Infrastructures and the powerful sense of development that they promise are thus seen to be harbingers of broader expectations of peace building and state formation, an

invaluable tool to provide tangible benefits to the population, and commensurate visibility for donors (see Collier 2007, Le More 2008). Such a teleological view of development however not only has limited power in explaining the role of infrastructure in promoting economic growth, let alone conflict stabilization, it also provides little insight into the socio-materiality of infrastructure and the ways in which these networks tend to consolidate spatial patterns of fragmentation and inequality.

These rather narrow development accounts reify the binaries and divisions explored in the previous section –that is the natural and the social, the human and the non-human, the material and the cultural, the technical and the political, etc. They neglect the 'infrastructural' interplay between technical, material, social, economic and spatial relations through which development transformations occur. Instead, development discourse and practice depend on the creation of a neat division between projects of intervention and the contexts that they set out to transform. This means that the many processes in which infrastructural projects are implicated in are often rendered invisible. It is in this way that infrastructures can be transformed into a neutral description of various prerequisites to economic growth and statehood, without considering the historical legacies and political contexts in which they are situated. In other words, infrastructures become a way of talking about the necessities of development without recourse to politics. This not only underlines the technocratic and apolitical veneer associated with such 'development' strategies but also the profound flaws that inform development actors' "unsophisticated but common assumption about the linear progress between peace, security and development" (Le More, 2005:7). This 'will to improve' which often informs theory and practice effectively renders uneven development realities –in 'post-conflict scenarios or otherwise— into technocratic (and thus de-politicized) interventions amenable to programs of improvement (Ferguson, 1990; Mitchell, 2002; Li, 2007; Moore, 2005). Such reductions have, as Mathew Coleman puts it, "the clear benefit of streamlining complex chains of reasoning so they can be apprehended statistically, and smoothing out uneven topographies of political economy so that large-scale conclusions can be reached" and, I would add, 'solutions' implemented (2008:36). The result invariably is to separate the development's technical aspects (material of discursive) from politics—development is always the cure, never the cause (Mitchell, 2004). This narrow focus on development and infrastructure is thus troublesome because it diverts attention away from the particularities of each context and the broader spatial political economics at play.

Palestine, and more specifically the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has certainly not escaped the globalizing logics of capitalism and the shifting political economies and governance of infrastructure. Indeed, if anything, the Oslo Accords promised redistribution and democratization –under settler occupation— by adopting free market principles in the delivery of essential services (WB, 1993). Although little attention has been paid to the implications of neoliberal reform, let alone critical and spatial approaches of the socio-material nature of infrastructure and its governance, there is however an increasing literature that is reviving a political economy framework to resituate Palestine within its broader political and economic context (Hanieh, 2008, 2013a, 2013b; Turner 2012; Nakhleh 2012; Khalidi and Samour 2011; Taraki 2008; Hever 2010; Botmeh, 2014; Rabie, 2014). This work stems from a concern with the fundamental flaws of the development apparatus that accompanied Oslo's 'false decolonization'. As such, they provide a critical response to applied-policy oriented research in relation to attempts at urban (re)construction and development. To be clear, this burgeoning literature builds upon earlier and more historical studies that take into consideration political economy and settler colonial perspectives while recognizing the internal divisions and class interests that splinter the national struggle (Zureik, 1976; Hilal, 1976; Doumani 1995; Roy 1995; 2001; Shafir, 1996; Lockman 1996; Samara, 2001; Farsakh 2002; 2006; Nitzan and Bichler 2002; Massad 2006).

Bringing a spatial political economy perspective to bear on more conventional development accounts of infrastructure allows us thus to recognize the profound political nature of infrastructure. Yet it also enables a reading of development practice as a process of continuous spatial reorganization whereby infrastructure and territory are coproduced and transformed together. This spatial and material sensibility to development and governance forms of infrastructure calls attention to landscapes of inequality and racialized difference in ways that abstract aspatial development approaches cannot. Indeed, to understand inequality, segregation and processes of splintering urbanism one needs to consider their material and concrete forms and how they become spatialized; for these conditions, at least in Palestine, are largely the result of abstract and universal processes of capitalism and settler colonialism but also a product of the profoundly material forms these power relations and forces adopt in this particular context. Infrastructure networks offer thus an exceptional site to explore the material and geographical history of 'uneven development' (Smith, 2008). Yet, if reclaiming a critical and spatial political economy is vital, then equally important is to consider the long history of racialized dispossession and expropriation driven by settler colonialism. It is in this way that we can understand, as the Jean and John Comaroffs put it for

the context of South Africa, the contradictory juncture of attempts at political liberation and ongoing economic liberalization (2001).

Settler colonialism and the production of settler/native space

To situate the analysis of infrastructure in the context of the case study, this dissertation also builds on the emerging field of settler colonial studies. This scholarship departs from the fundamental premise that settler colonialism is analytically distinct and antithetical from colonialism –even if the two might overlap, interact and be in tension with each other in time. In pedagogic terms, Lorenzo Veracini (2006) compares settler colonial and colonial phenomena as the difference between a circle and a line: whereas in colonial states settlers go out to the colonies and then return home in a circular fashion; in settler colonialism there is no return as the goal becomes transforming the new colony into 'home'. In this sense, the experience of indigenous populations in contexts like India, Egypt, Cameroon or Congo–where the aim of colonizers was mostly resource extraction and other forms of exploitation— looks very different from the experience in places like North America, Australia, South Africa, Northern Ireland and Palestine –where the primary object is the expropriation of land and the concomitant erasure (literal or partial) of the Indigenous population through displacement, appropriation, genocide, and/or assimilation by a settler community wed by shared religious and national convictions. It is worth quoting at length the most heightened invocation of Patrick Wolfe –a leading scholar in the field: "the primary object of settler-colonization is the land itself rather than the surplus value to be derived from mixing native labor with it. Though, in practice, indigenous labor was indispensable to Europeans, settler-colonization is at base a winner-take-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement. The logic of this project, a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population, informs a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct – invasion is a structure not an event." (2006:387). Because settler colonialism is "a resilient formation that rarely ends", this phenomenon is "a global and transnational phenomenon, and as much a thing of the past as a thing of the present" (Cavanagh and Veracini, 2013:1). As the case of Palestine reminds us –like Australia, Hawai'i, Canada or Northern Ireland—the "age of settler colonialism may be behind us but its legacies are everywhere to be seen" (Elkins and Pedersen, 2005:1).

The burgeoning literature on settler colonialism includes research dealing with this formation as a separate category –from other colonial phenomena typology—in the context of comparative analysis (see Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995; Elkins and Pedersen 2005; Bateman and Pilkington, 2011); analytical works on the structures of settler colonial

formations (Wolfe 1999, 2001; Moses 2005; Veracini, 2010); gender, sexuality and the biopolitics of settler colonialism (Morgensen, 2011; Puar, 2013); indigeneity, settler violence and racism (Smith, 2010; Kauanui et al., 2008); histories of legal and imperial transformation (Ford, 2010); or indigenous resistance and decolonization (Waziyatawin, 2008; Veracini, 2006). The materialities and spatial manifestations of settler colonial phenomena, however, have been largely neglected in these accounts, even though, as Patrick Wolfe has compellingly argued that 'territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element' (2006:388). Indeed, whereas much of this literature leans towards the discursive aspects and imaginative geographies of settler colonialism –in line with the tendency of postcolonial studies to focus on texts, enunciations, identity, memory and systems of signification— less attention is given to the ways the ideological and racialized underpinnings that produce dispossession become materialized and spatialized. To be clear, both aspects, the material and the symbolic, are crucial in order to understand settler colonial geographies. As Edward Said put it: "Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from struggle over geography, that struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginary" (Said, 1993:7).

In this sense, a notable exception in the settler colonial literature is the fantastic edited collection *Making Settler Colonial Space* by Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds.[11] The editors emphasize how despite existing research, "the spatial dimensions of colonialism remains somewhat distanced from the human and social histories, the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and newcomers, and the legal shaping and segregation of settler societies" (2010:4). The contributions to this volume all stress in different ways how the political ideologies and practices of settler colonialism can be narrated by taking into consideration the reorganization of landscapes and the production of space. Yet, central to this book are also the ways settler colonialism was premised on distinctive imaginative and 'anticipatory geographies' which, like *terra nullius*, depicted the lands to be conquered as 'wild' and 'empty' of indigenous populations (Veracini, 2010). As Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmons put it, "settler colonisation was distinctive for its structured imagining away, or cartographic genocide, of Indigenous peoples" (2010:13). Finally, the book emphasizes the importance of looking beyond the field into other disciplines with a spatial sensibility such as social, cultural and historical geography –

[11] See also Penelope Edmons Urbanizing Frontiers. Indigenous peoples and settlers in 19th century Pacific Rim Cities (2010) and her contribution to the book, which is the most sustained spatial analysis of the entire volume.

noting however that these tend to conflate the spatial politics of settler colonies with those of the colonies more broadly (2010:2).

Indeed, if we are to understand the materiality and spatialities of settler colonialism, it is crucial to pay attention to the wealth of research and significant contributions done in the discipline of geography. This literature –particularly historical, cultural, urban and political geography—has a large record of documenting the particular forms in which colonialism and space are co-constructed and experienced (see Blaut, 2012; Yeoh, 1996; Kobayashi, 2004; Myers, 2003; Gregory, 2004; Legg, 2008; Kipfer, 2007; Painter and Jeffrey, 2009; Sharp, 2008; Harris, 2011). Like the broader discipline of geography, these accounts are heavily influenced by Henri Lefebvre's work on how space is produced and experienced. In essence Lefebvre postulates that space is a (complex) social product or construction (1991). In other words, "space is fundamentally bound up with social reality and does not exist 'in itself' but rather it is produced"[12] (Schmid, 2008:28). Lefebvre's work, as Stuart Elden reminds us, is vital to understand that "spatiality is as important as, but must not obscure considerations of, temporality and history" and that space "is the ultimate locus and medium of struggle, and is therefore a crucial political issue" (Elden, 2007:107). In the words of Lefebvre: "There is a politics of space because space is political" (Lefebvre, 1970:59). Bringing these insights to bear on the field of settler colonial studies is essential for if, as Lefebvre argued, "every society - and therefore every mode of production - produces a certain space, its own space", then what kind of spaces are produced by settler colonial societies? Or what are we to make of its corollary, native space? And if, as Lefebvre contends, space naturalizes power and obscures the conditions of their own production, then what is revealed when we take seriously the spatialities and materialities of settler colonialism?[13]

To briefly follow up on these points, it is important to note that settler colonialism should not only be seen purely as a process of negation. As Wolfe suggests, "settler colonialism destroys to replace" (2006:388). Wolfe quotes Theodor Herzl, founding father of the Zionist settler colonial movement, to further make his point: "If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct" (Herzl, 1941:38 in Wolfe, 2006). Indeed, if the settler colonial impulse is to erase the presence of indigenous populations –their towns and cities,

[12] For Lefebvre, space can be divided in three dialectically interrelated processes: perceived space (as the physical/material space which produces the perceived aspect of space), the conceived space (as mental and imagined constructs of analysts and experts that conceive space), and spaces of representation (as discourses of space which produce an experience or lived space). This analysis is crucial because it brings the material and the mental together.

[13] Even though the introduction of settler colonial approaches to geography, and viceversa, is being rather slow, there are some productive intersection between settler colonial studies and geography that include the work of Sherene Razack (2002), Lorenzo Veracini (2010), Adam J. Baker (2012) or Penelope Edmonds (2010).

culture, education, productive systems, etc.— then its replacement with a settler society and its sovereignty is the necessary outcome. In this sense, for Wolfe, settler colonialism's moment of replacement entails a 'positive' or 'productive' relation. Yet, this important observation – which assumes the most radical outcome and end point of settler colonialism—leaves unaccounted a significant aspect of this dissertation: that is, the processes through which settlers continuously re-configure the spaces of the remaining indigenous population until they are either displaced and/or assimilated and settlers indigenized. In this way, the corollary of settler colonialism and its 'positive' dimensions not only include the erasure and replacement of spaces and populations –actual and constructed—but also the continuous strategies of spatial relocation and confinement and population control. Considering this broader 'creative destruction' or rather 'destructive creation'-like process is crucial for a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of the spatialities of settler colonialism. This is particularly so in contexts, like the West Bank, where Israeli settler colonialism has not yet succeeded in achieving its goal, that is the moment "when the settlers are 'indigenized' and cease to be seen as settlers", as has happened in pre-1948 Palestine (Veracini, 2013). Take for instance the Wadi Nar anecdote with which we began this introduction. The road, as part of the settler colonial toolbox, not only destroys to replace, it also enables rearticulating and reassembling –materially and symbolically— indigenous space and population as settlers relentlessly attempt to consolidate themselves. Understanding these spatial forms and strategies is crucial to illustrating how settler colonialism is held together and the ways it constantly strives to consolidate itself. These practices that craft settler and native space—by means of destruction, construction, re-construction and/ or disruption—are at the core of the spatial politics of settler colonialism.

Drawing on these literatures facilitates the task of mapping the geographies and histories of settler infrastructure in Palestine. This is all the more relevant, for, as Colin Harris argues: "the initial ability [of colonialism] to dispossess rested primarily on physical power and the supporting infrastructure of the state" (2004:165). Indeed the use of infrastructure to reshape landscapes and spaces is not only a historically enduring phenomenon in the making of colonial and settler colonial modernities but also, as suggested before, of capitalist uneven development and nation building. Looking at the spatialities and materiality of settler colonialism from a geographical perspective contributes to a broader debate about how to research settler colonial formations beyond ideology, through materiality, embodiment and spatiality. Indeed, infrastructures, whether roads, pipes or wires, are an example of material and geographical formations that must be explained and investigated beyond attention to social construction.

These socio-material and power constructs reveal settler state-sanctioned relations of dispossession, inequality and dependency in practice. Infrastructures, as spatial formations, can be indeed "powerful expressions of racial justification and silencing of alternative values and narratives" (Chari, 2008:1911). In this sense, infrastructure provides a window into settler colonialism, one that looks beyond the difficulties (perhaps impossibility) of representing dispossession by turning to the material artifacts that enable and mediate its expression –spatially, socially, economically and politically (Gould, 2014).

Using a settler colonial lens is not only useful for a situated and spatial understanding of infrastructure; it is also vital to redressing predominant views –from journalists, scholars, government officials and other observers—that consider Palestine/Israel as a site of conflict between two equal parts, the object of an exceptional occupation, and/or a classic form of colonialism (the latest of its kind) that exclusively operates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These readings, which circulate widely among Israelis, Palestinians, and others alike, are misleading and inaccurate for they tend to conflate conflict, occupation, and colonialism with the distinct and enduring form of settler colonialism. This differentiation is crucial because words –such as conflict and occupation—and the moral grammar they mobilize are a powerful way of (mis)constructing widespread imaginaries that structure the way we come to understand the world. As such, it is vital to re-embed (rather than discard) these analytical categories in their historical, political, economic and cultural frameworks (Peteet, 2005). As John Collins argues, these entrenched claims about Palestine have a 'sedimentary effect' that obscure the actual political, economic and social structures in place and denies the fact that Palestine/Israel is the site of an ongoing project of settler colonialism (2011:141). Despite the endurance of Israeli settler colonialism and the many studies that have thoroughly documented its logics and strategies through time, the neglect of settler colonialism is perhaps not surprising considering that this analysis has largely fallen into disuse in Palestine studies (Jabary et al, 2012). Indeed, whereas settler colonialism once served as a fundamental framework of ideological understanding, comparative study, and political action –for scholars and activists alike—today research tends to focus on Palestine as an exceptional and/or unique case.

Neglecting settler colonialism as both an analytical category and ongoing reality has resulted, among other things, in different Palestinian populations, in different local contexts –either inside Israel, in exile, or in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—being represented as isolated, analytically separate, and distinct from the larger structures of Israeli settler colonialism. It has also resulted in an excessive and somewhat

narrow preoccupation with the occupation and its outcomes –in the Gaza Strip and particularly the West Bank—rather than with the historical and broader structures that set it in place and to which it is connected. In other words, there is a sustained tendency to incorporate the exceptionalism and fragmentary logics of Israel's settler colonialism. This has, in turn, evolved into wide-ranging scholarship, which can be term as the 'school of occupation studies', that has become extremely concerned yet overly fascinated with the brutality and logics of Israel occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This shift is especially pronounced among a generation of researchers, including myself, who have become to a large extent influenced by the power, logics, rationale, discourses, practices and outcomes of the 1994 Oslo accords – a watershed moment in the history of Palestine. Yet the pervasive exceptionalism and fragmentary logics embedded in this research can also be seen as a result of broader shifts in academic knowledge and practice; the enormous influence of scholarship and popular discourse on Zionism's exceptional nature; an outcome of the insularity, under-theoretical and overly-empirical focus specific to Area Studies;[14] and/or a result of an scholarly production that mirrors the ruptures and changes in emphasis by the Palestinian liberation movement (e.g. from one state to two states) and the sustained incoherence of contemporary Palestinian politics (Jabary et al, 2012). This narrow focus tends to abstract Palestine from its regional and global setting, from the larger historical context that constitutes the present situation, and ultimately to obscure rather than reveal the comprehensive nature and logics of settler colonialism.

Indeed, one of the main problems of this trend towards studying the occupation is that it often internalizes occupation as an ontological category distinct from the larger structures of Israeli settler colonialism. Yet, the occupation framework, as it is often conceived, necessarily imposes analytical boundaries on space (i.e. West Bank and Gaza Strip) and time (i.e. post-1967), in addition to categories, discourses, and materialities that are embedded in colonial power relations and operationalised through this approach. The Green Line, the border between Israel and the Palestinian reserves, is one example of this phenomenon: it has become a powerful symbolic and material signifier that enforces, and takes for granted, the fragmentation of the Palestinian polity. With few exceptions, it is a line that is rarely crossed in scholarly accounts of Palestine – in either direction. Different Palestinian populations have come to be represented as isolated, analytically separate, pieces of an impossible puzzle (Jabary et al, 2012). In addition, the focus on the second stage of colonization, the 1967

[14] These ideas on exceptionalism and the politics of uniqueness benefited from discussions with Mezna Qato, Sobhi Samour and Kareem Rabie as well as from a recent conversation with Nadia Abu El Haj during the PhD defense of Kareem Rabie at CUNY, NYC (September, 2014)

occupation, emphasizes settlement by Israelis in the West Bank and absolves previous generations of Zionists and Israel itself of settler colonialism. To script Palestine exclusively through the lens of the occupation framework is thus to fail to acknowledge the ways in which contemporary Palestinian realities are constituted within a broader array of social, political, economic, and cultural geographies.

SEEING THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURES

The conceptual and interdisciplinary framework outlined above brings materiality, power, space, politics, economy, and history together in ways that unsettle deterministic social sciences approaches to infrastructure and predominant area studies readings of Palestine. Crucially for this dissertation, this way of 'seeing through infrastructure' underlines the profound political nature of infrastructure and the often hidden operations and effects of its construction and governance. In other words, it makes infrastructure visible by unearthing the loaded material landscapes that emerge from present as well as past social, political and economic projects and struggles. More to the point, this lens illustrates and confirms how infrastructures are not material artifacts that are the passive foundation on which politics takes place, but rather a heterogeneous assembly through which political, economic and social relations are constituted. Indeed, a central aspect that emerges from this analytical framework are the ways infrastructure can be seen as complex assemblages of materials, technologies, institutions, interests and geographical practices that are held together through messy material and symbolic constructions. This approach endorses the proposition that old analytic binaries –such as social/technology or economic/political —no longer have much analytical purpose. Yet, as Otter contends, "abandoning some of the premises of twentieth-century social and cultural theory does not mean abandoning political analysis" (2013:54). In effect, when infrastructure assemblages are brought together with a critical political economy perspective, they reveal its power dynamics and the way particular development and governance forms of infrastructure can produce uneven and fragmented landscapes that consolidate and commodify relations of inequality, segregation and racialized difference. Finally, attention to materiality that is grounded in settler colonial studies stresses the political continuities and discontinuities that inform the articulation of these networks through time and its role in the production of settler and native space. Ultimately, seeing through infrastructures entails deploying a relational and spatial approach that works through "social relations in action" (Graham and Marvin, 2011:216) in ways that capture the dynamism and changing relationships between infrastructure, territory, power and population. This gaze, as we shall see in the following chapters, allows us to address the critical queries that emerge

from the anecdote with which this dissertation began– that is, how the fabric of settler colonialism and uneven development in Palestine is built, governed, experienced and contested.

In seeing through and producing a study about infrastructure grids in Palestine the aims of the *Fabric of Life* are manifold. The main objective is to document, analyze and produce an alternative and innovative account where infrastructures, particularly roads and electricity, play a central role in defining the histories and geographies of Palestine. More specifically, the dissertation aims to highlight how infrastructures, and the ways they organize and rearticulate spaces and populations, are crucial to fully understand the entanglement of settler colonialism and uneven development –their shared genealogy and its contested nature. At the same time, it brings an understanding of how everyday and seemingly banal infrastructures become loci for politics, as much as laws, policy plans or colonial treaties. In other words, it shows how infrastructures become a matter of political concern, or, in contrast, how they are rendered as purely technical, and therefore depoliticized matters through rituals of state building and neoliberal development.

By focusing on infrastructures assemblages, this dissertation complicates predominant accounts about occupation and as such makes a contribution to Palestine studies at various levels. Indeed, shifting attention away from prevailing nationalist and discursive approaches and/or normative (geo)political theories of occupation towards settler colonialism and uneven development –as socio-material processes— presents a more inclusive, contingent, and complex understanding of Palestine. The picture that emerges as a result of this shift brings new actors, processes and questions into view. This approach considers "the conjunction of the social and the material without the social swallowing the material" (Knappett 2007:20). Looking at infrastructure assemblages emphasises as well the importance of bringing the material and symbolic aspects of infrastructure together. In this way, the dissertation advances a full account of the density, thickness, and multi-scalar relations of settler colonial occupation and uneven development. Using insights from critical political economy and settler colonialism, this dissertation de-exceptionalizes accounts that obscure the broader regional and global forces and relations to which Palestine is a part. As Junka-Aikio argues, "despite the persistence of Israeli occupation and its omnipotent role in Palestinian everyday lives, contemporary Palestine is also entangled in a variety of complex power relations that do not bear any necessary relationship to Israeli occupation and which tend to undermine, rather than support, the constitution of a strong national movement based on collective unity" (2012:120). By making visible the layered assemblage of discourses, materials, practices, and actors that constitute infrastructure we can begin to understand how these socio-

material networks are an outcome and a means of settler colonialism, as well as a mirror of the technocratic and depoliticizing effects of forms of Palestinian development that antepose rituals of state building and economic performance to challenge the settler colonial present.

A second objective of this study is to engage with and contribute to recent social science scholarship –particularly critical urban studies— that focuses on infrastructure networks. More specifically, by looking at electricity and road infrastructure this dissertation contributes to addresses the actual theoretical and empirical lacunae of accounts that (as shown above) have thus far largely focused on water. This project underwrites efforts at de-centering the predominance of theories and empirical cases generated in and by Euro-American contexts by studying a peripheral case in the 'south' that enables a more situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Robinson, 2011). This is not, as McFarlane and Rutherford contend, "simply to invoke heterogeneity or to endlessly multiply case studies, but to argue that claims about infrastructure need to be — in Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000) phrasing — provincialized, and that informing accounts with a greater diversity of urbanisms can lead to more situated and subjective understandings of infrastructure" (2008:371). In this sense, the *Fabric of Life* hopes, on the one hand, to bring attention to a region that is often underexplored within the discipline of geography. As Jim Glassman argues, "It is unfortunate, given its importance in global affairs, that Middle Eastern studies tends to be somewhat underrepresented in geography" (2011:709). On the other, by studying a settler colonial context, this work adds a caveat to recent efforts and proponents of "a post-colonial theory of the urban fabric that is at once more general and more situated" (McFarlane, 2008:345; see also Roy, 2011). Indeed, before rushing into the postcolonial we should be cautious and pay particular attention to the specific geographies of distinctive forms of colonialism. Otherwise we might undermine the foundations for a 'healthy' comparative field that ends up obscuring the very particularities it seeks to address. As Penelope Edmonds argues, we should be aware of the "propensity to conflate the spatial politics of settler colonies with those of the colonies more broadly" (2010:6). This is especially so considering the "increasing, though distinct, scholarly focus on the intricacies of distinction that sets settler colonialism apart in the annals of European colonial ventures" (idem).

The third aim of the *Fabric of Life* is to contribute to the emerging field of settler colonial studies by paying attention to the spatialities and materialities of these socio-political formations. It documents the particular ways in which settler colonialism produces settler and native space as a way to think about the violence of colonial states towards the indigenous populations it disposes and segregates. In doing so, this

research seeks to contributes to recent calls to attend "to the local, particular and often violent historiographies in settler colonies [and] the very micro-conditions which underpin, produce and reinforce settler spaces in our nominally postcolonial societies" (Banivanua-Mar and Edmonds, 2010:2). Moreover it "engage[s] overtly with settler colonialism and its operations as a specific analytic frame though which to understand the antecedent historical forces in the formation of [settler colonialism] as urbanizing polities" (Edmonds, 2010:4). Equally important, the dissertation seeks to locate Palestine in the comparative framework of settler colonial studies. The need for such engagement arises from the recognition that while Zionism and the Palestinians are gradually being included in the growing body of scholarly works on comparative settler colonialism, the analytical framework that comparative settler colonialism offers has yet to enter the field of Palestine studies (Jabary et al, 2012). This dissertation joins efforts that challenge critical conventional wisdom on Palestine and occupation, by scrutinizing how settler colonialism becomes embodied in the material fabric, thus offering an account of how settler colonialisms can be empirically carved out as a research problem; for in order to reveal the real operations of settler colonialism we should aim at explaining rather than taking these operations as an explanation. In other words, while Israel's tactics have often been described as settler colonial, the settler colonial (infra)structure underpinning them must be a central object of analysis.

Finally, by focusing on infrastructure this research also contributes to growing efforts at materializing social science research (Whatmore, 2006), challenging the pervasive disciplinary boundaries in modern social science that tend to separate and overlook the relations between economy, politics, technology and culture (Mitchell 2004). Thus this project offers a highly interdisciplinary study that de-essentializes these categories by embracing the complexity and multiplicity of social formations, technologies and power, forms of agency and the practices of mediation and articulation constituting contemporary economic, political and cultural realities. Whereas interdisciplinary analysis is more difficult than what it appears in a name, an act of trespassing that does justice to disciplinary scholarship is a rich, necessary and liberating exercise. At the same time, this study fills a significant gap in Middle East studies, and particularly Palestine studies, by incorporating insights from science and technology, settler colonial and critical political economy studies that add valuable knowledge to the political relevance of material and technical 'things'. It shows how technology and power are constituted materially and symbolically in this region. An innovation of this research is the cross-fertilization of urban studies that draw from science and technology studies with the literature on Palestine, enabling a re-evaluation of current dominant paradigms –most specifically those

that deal with our understanding of technology, modernity, colonialism and development.

In summary, this dissertation develops a theoretically sound analysis that accounts for the ways in which the contested nature of infrastructure takes shape; how these networks are closely bound up with wider socio-technical, political, economical and cultural complexes that have contingent effects in different places and different times; and in which ways infrastructure, space, and population are mutually imbricated and inseparable from particular geometries of power to govern populations and shape uneven spatial configurations of infrastructure provision. By taking into account the particular case study of roads and electricity grids, it derives more general conclusions that can contribute to understanding the role and complexities of the geographies of settler colonialism and uneven development in ways that are relevant to ongoing research but also for indigenous populations in struggle. At stake in this theoretical approach is a conceptualization of infrastructure that destabilizes and reconfigures existing boundaries between technology and society, the material and the symbolic or the human and non-human and how these particular assemblages are territorialized in Palestine. With regards to the field of Palestine studies, the focus on roads and electricity brings an unexplored and fascinating reading of the past and present history of Palestine. Even though the dissertation stresses the critical role of infrastructure in configuring geographies of settler colonialism and uneven development, it does not do so in a determinist fashion. The study avoids over-generalizing or exaggerating the role of infrastructures in compounding for the overall situation; these networks play a crucial role always in combination with many other factors. Ultimately, this approach provides a timely corrective to area studies largely defined (understandably) by geopolitics and violence, offering instead an approach that allows for careful consideration of what might be learned from the seemingly mundane ‘things’ that still today connect (albeit selectively) spaces and populations otherwise increasingly divided.

PUTTING INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS TO WORK

Seeing through infrastructure entails certain methodological implications, which to a large extent have informed both the potential and limits of this analysis and the structure of the thesis chapters. This section explains the choice and use of particular strategies and tools for data gathering and analysis in connection with the theoretical framework outlined earlier, particularly the use of a political ethnography of infrastructure. Moreover, it presents an analytical-interpretative framework that explains the reasons behind the methodological choices, one that is premised on a strategy of

materializing, historicizing and politicizing infrastructure. Finally, it documents the nitty-gritty details of the materials, sources, people and issues that have been looked at and the ways in which the study has gradually made sense of the data gathered and research design –the messiness and research itineraries of studying infrastructure grids as assemblages.

A political ethnography of infrastructure

Seeing through infrastructure as a method involves looking at infrastructure in relation to its worldly context, exploring the relations of which it is part, paying attention to the practices that construct it socially and materially and also considering the objects, actors, and processes that 'cross along its path'. It involves looking at the ways infrastructure networks are constituted but also questioning why they look the way they do and how they came into existence. In other words, seeing through infrastructure can be seen as a process of bundling up an array of contextual elements. Yet, what questions should be asked about infrastructures? How does one decide which components of the infrastructural assemblage under examination require particular attention and/or further investigation? Which are the indicators and research clues to follow? The socio-technical approach, as suggested earlier, forces us to carefully look at infrastructure as an assemblage of actors (human and non-human) that may include power grids, engineers, consultants, contractors, state institutions, entrepreneurs, donor agencies, NGOs, producers, consumers, etc. while simultaneously considering how these technologies enroll spaces and populations in broader processes of uneven development and settler colonialism. At the same time, an inclusive theoretical and empirical engagement with infrastructure requires a methodology capable of historicizing, politicizing and materializing these socio-material networks. In this sense, looking at infrastructure from an assemblage perspective can best be described as a 'political infrastructural ethnography' (Star, 1999; Bruni 2005). In line with traditional ethnographic approaches and in the context of this research, this entails interacting with infrastructure in its 'natural habitat'.

If Mark Anthony Falzon defines ethnography broadly as "an eclectic methodological choice which privileges an engaged, contextually rich and nuanced type of qualitative social research, in which fine grained daily interactions constitute the lifeblood of the data produced" (2012:1). Edward Schatz suggests two core principles undergirding political ethnography: on the one hand, participant observation or "Immersion in a community, a cohort, a locale or a cluster of related subject positions" and, on the other, what he refers to as gleaning, that is "the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social

and political reality" (2009:5). Both authors, albeit in different ways, problematize the classic idea of ethnographic fieldwork. They challenge the idea of studying sites as a "container of a particular set of social relations, which could be studied and possibly compared with the contents of other containers elsewhere" (Falzon, 2012:1). But also question the understanding that fieldwork and 'desktop' research can be separated (Schatz, 2009). Indeed, recent ethnographic contributions have begun to shift their focus from tribes and sites to mobile artifact-oriented ethnographies. Marcus' (1995) multi-sited geography, having its roots in Appadurai's (1986) work on the 'social life of things', or the 'follow the object'-studies rooted in Latour's Actor Network Theory (1999), have all been very influential in shaping a wave of studies with an ethnographic sensibility which tie relations to objects, often in many places in time and space (Baiocchi et al., 2013; Law, 2009).[15] More specifically, what ANT-inspired ethnographies add to the discussions of rethinking ethnographies, is a way to break with the micro versus macro divide and the role of actors in the makings and unmakings of the 'field' (Baiocchi et al. 2013, based on Latour, 2005 and Blok, 2010). Moreover, these approaches to hybrid human/non-human assemblages also reveal interrelationships, uncover processes, discourses and power in ways that broaden our understanding of the political realm. As such, these ethnographies call attention to the ways in which a myriad of actors create, enact, and assemble the context in which they act.

The 'follow the object' approach pursued in this dissertation has been an adventurous walk where, as Annemarie Mol perceptively warned: "nobody [holds] your hand, there are no assurances" (in Baiocchi et al 2013:323). Yet it has also been an exciting walk that has provided particular and detailed insights into the assembling, disassembling and reassembling of infrastructure networks. But, more crucially, it has opened up and revealed a world of dynamic and complex contingencies, which have profoundly and crucially shaken a number of my own assumptions and preconceptions about theory and the context under examination. More specifically, this approach has enabled an intimate window into the processes and logics of settler colonialism and uneven development in Palestine. Studying and describing infrastructure with a political ethnographic and spatial sensibility to the ways "matters get assembled more or less precariously for a moment" (Law and Singleton 2013:500) shows how the development and governance of these networks are open-ended processes, bringing in a possibility for (political) change. Indeed, the infrastructures of settler colonialism and uneven development are not just things out there, they are things that are constantly remade and that need to be permanently held together.

[15] See also Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997); Michael Burawoy (2001) and Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier (2008)

Materializing, historicizing and politicizing infrastructure

To capture the complexity and richness of the empirical case studies, the set of papers included in this dissertation focus on the ways the triad of infrastructure, space and population are produced through but also productive of political and economic rationalities. Understanding the power flowing among and through relations between road and electricity infrastructure, population and space, entails tracing how these connections are built and the ways in which they are transformed into energy/(im)mobilities, profits, inequalities, and/or political power (see Mitchell, 2011). Combining a political ethnography of infrastructure with an analytic of socio-material and socio-technical assemblages, together with spatial analyses of political economy and settler colonialism, this dissertation seeks to materialize, historicize and politicize infrastructure as an entry point into processes of uneven development and settler colonialism in Palestine. Such a radically relational approach involves plotting the connections among actors, actions, and processes as well as determining how they constitute and define each other. In this sense, the observations recorded need to be able to locate, analyze and recount complex practices that perform dynamic relations. Moreover, they have to be able to go beyond capturing and describing current sets of relations, and include ways to report how these relations are held together and evolve over time, its genealogies. Looking at the development and governance of roads and electricity networks in this way, as will be shown throughout the study, requires a framing of infrastructure that is responsive to contingency and complexity. As such, the dissertation seeks to: add scale and spatiality to avoid the flat topographies often found in geographical accounts of Palestine; to see settler colonialism and uneven development in ways that show its dynamism and stability/instability; and, against fragmentary approaches which either focus on the macro or the micro levels, to offer a comprehensive approach that bundles context, non-human –infrastructures, checkpoints, barriers, etc.— and human actors –lawyers, soldiers, contractors, government officials, development practitioners, etc. Looking at roads and electricity as assemblages becomes a means to show how these infrastructures are co-constitutive of settler colonial and uneven development realities rather than a distinct form. A first set of guiding questions during the fieldwork therefore focused on the historical and geographical production of electricity and roads in Palestine. This involved untangling how they emerged in relation to material and discursive practices. As an illustration, digging into the genealogy of Road 443 (the case study presented in chapter two) and linking this to current uses and everyday users' experiences of the road, showed how infrastructure furthers inequality and consolidates relations of dispossession and segregation.

Yet it also showed the contested and contingent nature in the construction and governance of the road.

Indeed, an ethnographic research approach typically includes a sensibility to everyday life relations. In showing how infrastructure change and are contested over time, the analysis reveals the spatial multiplicities of everyday life. In other words, it shows, as McFarlane (2011b:732) puts it: “the possibilities of contexts to be materially made in different ways, and to be expressed by different groups in a range of socio-material alignments through the diverse uses and imaginaries of urban sites, objects, institutions and networks”. Crucial during fieldwork on Road 443, for example, were interviews with taxi drivers, passengers, workers, students, patients and political activists that revealed how these actors actually interact with and contest road closures through various means. This exercise was vital in so far as it revealed ‘hidden’ practices of survival, coping mechanisms and political acts of contestation that can only emerge when we consider matter as lively and active, rather than static and passive. In bringing everyday life and contingency to the study of infrastructure, the dissertation does not attempt to romanticize experiences under settler colonialism. Rather it seeks to counter macro readings that view settler colonialism as an inescapable and fixed force imposed from above and that, in turn, fail to account for these bodily encounters and experiences. Furthermore, focus on everyday practices of mobility and access to electricity supply was a powerful exercise in understanding how physical acts of construction, disruption, destruction and reconstruction do not simply change the physical environment, but also reshape the ways in which people relate to it. For instance, the destruction of the Gaza Power plant (as detailed in chapter four) does not only constitute a violent moment of destruction but, most importantly, an act which disrupts everyday life with significant public health consequences –without electricity, water cannot be extracted from the wells and put into the distribution system, neither dirty waters from houses be transferred to sewage treatment plants, with no regular power supply lifesaving or dialysis equipment cannot function nor there is a possibility to maintain a minimal level of sanitation to avoid epidemics. As will be shown, the process of assembling and reassembling infrastructure networks over time changes our perception of the meaning of seemingly banal road and electricity grids. From this perspective ‘following infrastructure networks’ is both a method to study the built environment and a way of understanding how these socio-material technologies are used for the strategic governing and ordering of territory and populations (Carter et al. 2011).

In using an assemblage perspective to infrastructure in a settler colonial context like Palestine, this dissertation does not articulate or push forth an infinite and ‘flat ontology’ of relations. The study of road and power

grids takes into consideration not only the genealogy of its construction, the planning and legal documents that legitimize them and the materials and people involved in their actual construction, but also the broader forces which shape it. In this way, the infrastructure assemblage presented throughout the dissertation is a multi-scalar analysis that goes beyond functionalist, depoliticized and determinist approaches. This does not mean however that the nature of this urban assemblage is less relevant. As Dimitris Dalakoglou and Penny Harvey argue—in the case of roads—the power of an ethnographic contribution to the study of infrastructure "comes from the ways in which ethnographic studies locate specific roads and the material and social relations they entail, without needing to decide in advance on the ontology, the scale or the extension of such relations. Indeed ethnographies of roads allow the ethnographer to tease out the practices and imaginaries that work across scales, and thus across the traditional sociological categories: from materiality to human subjects, from the state to the society and from there to individuals; from global capitalist enterprises to local communities; from the politics of infrastructure development to cultural conditions of everyday life and so on" (2012:460).

In this dissertation, the analysis of electricity grids (see chapters four and five), connects wires, meters, planners, power plants, consumers, developers and utility service providers together and to the broader material and symbolic political economy of colonialism and uneven development. This focus unravels the connections and disconnections that are created and/or prevented in the process of establishing relations among the interests of a multiplicity of actors that ultimately constitute and shape these infrastructure networks. This approach enables insight into multiple forms of governing the material –whether biopolitical, necropolitical, colonial or neoliberal—, the contested nature of road and electricity construction, the imaginative and anticipatory geographies around infrastructures and the spatialities of development. Most importantly, this allows a window into larger political economic processes, which unearth the operational power, meanings and logics of settler colonialism and uneven development. In other words, the focus on infrastructure as assemblage is consistent with relational ontologies in the social sciences that "conceptualizes entities in terms of the relations though which they come to take on particular qualities in particular contexts, rather than in terms of their possession of a set of essential properties" (Bergmann et al., 2009:266). This relational approach brings power relations into the picture, materializing and politicizing infrastructures. Following the assemblage of infrastructures does not mean reducing these artefacts, in a fixed and narrow fashion to the relations it contains and shape at one particular point in time. Rather it is about engaging in a historicized analysis that gradually reveals the contested genealogy and political continuities and

discontinuities that inform these networks. When doing this, as shown in this dissertation, these networks appear constituted in past and present colonial discourses of modernity, development, legality, and security in an attempt to make natural, legitimate and inevitable the production of settler/native space. In this sense, roads and electricity grids appear as a tool of analysis, but also as an 'archive' of settler colonial and neoliberal practice.

This analytic and method of analysis allows us to see how the often neglected, taken for granted and seemingly utilitarian life-support systems of modern societies are transformed into meaningful socio-material artefacts which can become objects of destruction, vehicles for colonization, sites of neoliberal experimentation, governance tools, etc. In this way, attending to the role and nature of infrastructures can provide powerful insights into critical structural processes such as inequality, segregation and dispossession. As an example, unravelling the genealogy of electricity grids in the West Bank (see chapter five), which are seen by many as a coherent neoliberal development outcome of the Oslo agreements, shows how these networks were born out of multiple, contested and contingent projects of Israeli settler colonialism and Palestinian efforts at development. The grids were realized through and are the outcome of a myriad of institutions, discourses, actors and practices, which are all too often neglected. In this sense, this approach shows how, on the one hand, the current neoliberal attempt at electricity reform is not the only factor contributing to the increasing fragmentation, impoverishment and inequalities among the population. And on the other, it emphasizes the ways neoliberal reform consolidates and commodifies a long legacy of dispossession and dependency.

Of assemblages, controversies, and research itineraries

The concept of assemblage has been mobilized in infrastructure studies and cognate research areas in ways that range from strict Latourian understandings to rather loose interpretations of assemblage as a methodological tool. As McFarlane argues, there is "no singular history of assemblage to be told, particularly when we contextualise assemblage thinking as expressed through grammars of gathering, networking and composition more broadly. Nor is there any consensus amongst urban researchers about how assemblage might specifically be used" (2011:207). Not all accounts that 'follow the object' do so with an ANT or assemblage framework in mind; for even when these analyses appear to do so, they don't necessarily use this theory and methods as part of their tool kit of social inquiry. Take for instances the work of Walter Benjamin (1999) who more than a century ago explored in his 'Arcades Project' the connections between material forms and capitalism. As Carter et al. put it, in Benjamin's work "Iron, glass,

arcades, boulevards, thresholds, door handles, old signs, mailboxes, poster pillars, signboards, stairways mirrors, and lamps are all microcosms of bourgeois society and hold the keys to history" (2011:5). In this dissertation, assemblage is taken as a rather loose method and when referring to it, whether implicitly or explicitly, the bottom line is the idea of following objects, not just human activity.

Yet, the question remains how is one to come to terms, know and study non-human actors? In other words, in what ways can we trace the human and non-human actors and associations that co-constitute infrastructure networks? This dissertation looks at infrastructure assemblages in three ways: First, using a genealogical approach that pays attention to the historical dimension of the analysis and the ways different set of ideas, practices and interests get materialized in objects through time and space; Second, using discourse analysis of official (e.g. policy documents, legal texts, financial reports, governmental statements) and non-official texts (e.g. press commentaries, pamphlets, newspaper reports) as well as non-textual sources (e.g. interviews, documentary films, songs) that contribute to resurface and trace the connections and nature of the assemblages under examination; And Third, deploying an analytic with a political, spatial and relational sensibility that is informed by critical urban studies, political economy and settler colonialism, as outlined above. The combination of these forms of analysis is the guiding method that informs our study of roadscapes and electricityscapes in Palestine.

This approach requires adopting a flexible and eclectic amalgam of research techniques according to the case, the availability of sources and/or the feasibility of data collection. Studying infrastructure networks as assemblage begins with an actual understanding of their conception as socio-material forms which result from the actions of humans (e.g. governmental authorities, humanitarian and development aid agencies, engineers, military and political strategists, surveyors, activists, lawyers and judges, commuters, etc.) and non-humans (e.g. regulations, laws, standards, prescriptions, plans, wires, meters, asphalt, bitumen). The data construction process is relentlessly concerned with following these components (some closer than others) and paying attention to its genealogies and its relations to broader socio-political, economic and cultural processes. In order to define entry points into the case studies, the dissertation chose several controversies and events that happened while (or before) the research project was taking shape. Echoing Simon Carter et al. (2011:7), working "through controversies and events-such as the moments of their making or remaking", enables to make visible relations that are materialized in and through road-and-electricityscapes. Indeed, "when objects [such as infrastructure] become matters of concern or controversy then both the present and absent

actors and actants of an assemblage come to the fore; traces are left behind in the activity of forming, dismantling and reconfiguring" (Idem). In the words of Latour, "controversies provide the analyst with an essential resource to render the social connections traceable" (2005:30). It is around these infrastructure matters and matters of infrastructure that the genealogy of these socio-material networks have been traced.

Digressing for a moment, it is important to note that from the outset, the dissertation's central concern was the systematic destruction and construction of infrastructural networks and the ways in which these networks direct and reflect colonial patterns in the Palestinian context. More specifically, the aim was to call attention to a politics of 'infrastructural violence' that takes shape around struggles for control of, and access to, the infrastructural networks that sustain life, movement, and communication in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While stressing the interrelated ways in which infrastructural destruction, construction, disruption and reconstruction are integrated into broader technologies of colonial government and rule, the project also wanted to emphasize how Israeli efforts at control are constantly contested and subverted, ultimately leading to the articulation of counter-infrastructures that support life and sustain resistance. As such, even if the core interest was infrastructure, the attention revolved more around the violent ways infrastructural projects link geopolitics with biopolitics, the production of space, and how these practices were contested and subverted by those who are the objects of efforts of subordination and control. In this sense, this approach followed the more classic structure-agency debate in the social sciences.

Over time, however, as it becomes clear through the dissertation, this approach proved to be somewhat narrow, rigid and limited in terms of fully appreciating the more complex nature of socio-materialities or capturing the myriad dynamics and processes in which infrastructures are actually involved. Moreover, the possibility of representing and capturing Palestinian efforts to cope and deal with the imperatives of settler colonialism as conscious and collective acts of resistance proved to be a rather difficult task and a sensitive one at that. These limits however became a strength in so far as the approach shifted from a study of infrastructures (mostly from above) to following these networks (from below). By focusing on the material and the technical the outcome of this turn opened up a window into a far more complex, contingent, and richer reality of actors and processes that would have otherwise been neglected. In this sense, the methods deployed in and the outcomes of this dissertation are more the result of an intuition guided by the confrontation and learning process with the field and its folk rather than any prescribed methodology. The research found more value in an open sensibility to the field and in the productive tensions of

engaging with several disciplinary bodies of literature than in specific methods and theories.

Back to controversies, the first case study presented here (chapter three) revolves around an event that took place in the early 1980s, when the Israeli government confiscated private land from a Palestinian teacher's cooperative in the occupied West Bank to build an express route – 'Road 443'. This highway was meant as a Northeast-to-Southwest corridor to enable faster settler mobility between the metropolitan region of Tel Aviv and the Israeli colonies scattered along the road and around the Jerusalem area. Today while Israelis circulate freely through the road, Palestinians are banned from using it. Digging into this story meant going to great lengths to unearth the genealogy of the highway, which has been the object of several controversies through the last decades. The investigation began by travelling and studying the geography of the road, its hidden tunnels, passageways, checkpoints and gates. But also talking with passengers, patients, residents, workers, students and activists that have been affected by and attempted to contest (in different ways) the present closure and the history of its construction. The study meant reviewing documents from and interviewing individuals working with NGOs such as Al-Haq, LAWE, B'Tselem or ACRI, which have either monitored the evolution of this case and/or were involved in legally challenging the impacts and closure of the road. Crucial to this process was the study of legal documents that surprisingly offered a large amount of detail regarding the intricacies of the road as well as information concerning the position of the Israeli Government. Indeed, finding this kind of material is rare for the Israeli settler state does not need and often avoids giving public details about seemingly banal operations such as the building of colonial roads. This required, in turn, interviewing legal experts to give insights into the case and the legalistic jargon of the documentation. Also vital to this study was tracing the centrality of roads to the Zionist settler colonial endeavor, an exercise that included an understanding of the cultural and political imaginaries that legitimizes and frames road infrastructure as well as the ways these networks are used to dispossess and segregate Palestinians and consolidate settler colonialism. This involved studying secondary sources such as maps, development plans, songs from the early ideologues and pioneers of Zionism and more recent Israeli road plans, court cases, and humanitarian reports, as noted above. Finally, attention to the experiences of the road revealed the drama of and impacts on Palestinians unable to access or even cross the road. Yet, it also exposed a history of Palestinian contestation (by different means) and Israeli harassment to those that sought to contest the dispossession and segregation character of these policies. Ultimately, Road 443 proved to connect Tel Aviv with Jerusalem as much

as it connects overlapping discourses and practices of modernity, colonialism and legality.

A second controversy revolves around the Israeli destruction of Gaza's power plant (on June 2006) and its subsequent and intentional cuts of electricity and fuel supply to the Strip (chapter five). In many ways this event is linked to an earlier and equally important controversy, that is the Israeli unilateral 'disengagement' from Gaza. Because of the impossibility of accessing the Strip at the time, this case study somewhat stands apart from the rest in so far as it only uses secondary sources and mostly discourse analysis. In spite of this, it was important to pursue and incorporate this case into the dissertation for both the urgency of understanding the nature and consequences of this affair and because of its direct relevance to the dissertation. Indeed, the material that emerged from this criminal act was vital to identify one of the initial interests of this dissertation, infrastructural violence –that is the systematic Israeli efforts to destroy and misuse electricity (and other) infrastructures. Two particular themes stand out in this chapter: On the one hand, the power of imaginative geographies in (re-)constructing the Strip as a 'hostile territory' and essential infrastructures as 'legitimate targets' of colonial war; And, on the other, the various (colonial) forms of governing these networks, whether geopolitical, biopolitical, necropolitical and/or 'humanitarian'. To do this the chapter builds on the study of a wide range of Israeli governmental, legal, military, and humanitarian discourses and plans that emerged through the controversy and that were used to legitimize the targeting of infrastructure in the Strip. In so doing, concepts such as 'humanitarian minimum', 'infrastructural oxygen doctrine' and 'terror infrastructure' emerge in connection to exercises in counting megawatts and calories in ways that reveal the extent to which infrastructure brings the politics of colonial occupation to the very spaces of daily life practice. Equally important to this chapter is the short-and-long term public health implications of targeting these life-support systems. Exploring maps, reports, documentary films, statistics, and analyses coming from humanitarian observers on the ground (e.g. OCHA, Oxfam, Gisha, B'Tselm, Amnesty International) the chapter shows how modern life in Gaza was forced to a halt. The destruction of the power plant and the cutting of electricity and fuel supply disrupted and affected everyone and everything from home electric devices, family businesses, sewage distribution and treatment facilities, to health infrastructure such as lifesaving and dialysis equipment. Incidentally, this case triggered further interest in studying more closely processes of electrification in Palestine that turned out to be surprisingly underexplored, and to which I would pay closer attention at a later stage of the research.

An investigative piece of journalism by Nadia Hijab and Jesse Rosenfeld that appeared in the weekly magazine The Nation (2010) under the title "Palestinian roads: Cementing Statehood, or Israeli annexation?" lead to the study of a third case (chapter four). The piece exposed the construction by the Israeli Government, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and the USAID, of a Palestinian network of segregated roads that have come to be known as 'fabric of life' roads. Using this case as an entry point, was useful to learn about the ways 'development' is transformed into a mechanism to deal with short-term Palestinian needs arising from the imperatives of settler colonialism. This chapter is significant for it shifts the dissertation's sustained attention to the role of Israeli practices of settler colonialism into a broader range of actors and processes. Particularly it begins focusing on the materialization and materialities of international and national (neoliberal) development discourse and practice. This move complicates predominant accounts about occupation and breaks away with simplistic binaries that tend to neglect the interests and demands of a multiplicity of actors rarely brought into view; including the Palestinian Authority, donor community and international financial institutions but also a wide range of contractors, subcontractors and materials, such as the bitumen and aggregates that constitute the road[16]. In order to bring this multitude of 'actants' together into the picture, the research engaged in tens of semi-structured interviews with engineers, bureaucrats, consultants, officials, designers, municipality staff, activists, humanitarians, and politicians. Digging below the surface of roads led to the less pretty existence of highly political reports hidden into the online cable archives of WikiLeaks and also to a number of 'dead end roads'. Indeed, various requests to interview USAID and US Embassy officials were not granted or ended up being rather uncomfortable but not for that less revealing. Equally relevant to the study was the painstaking exercise of analyzing tens of technical and policy reports –documents that show the ways fabric of life roads and its associated closure regime are incorporated into rituals of Palestinian state building and neoliberal development, in ways that transform colonial infrastructure into a

[16] Unfortunately the two sections dealing with the political economy of fabric of life roads that complement this chapter (i.e. "Subcontracting the 'fabric of life': from the American people to… the American people" and "Following road materials") have not been included here for lack of time. Whereas the first section addresses, among other things, the ways in which USAID engages in unfair practices of contracting (including monopolizing contracts through US contractors and tax free operations), a more detailed account about the meaning of 'tight money' or 'bundled aid', the violation of 'international standards' of construction, the application of unfair and criminalizing security vetting protocols, and the capricious and dependency logic of (US)AID. The second section focuses on and follows bitumen, aggregates and other road components to surface the provenance, regulations, dependency, and political uses of these materials, For instance, if bitumen and road paint are mostly imported from Israel, the aggregate, in many instances, is bought by US contractors and Palestinian subcontractors from Israeli stone quarries illegally operating in the West Bank. This approach reveals an entrenched political economy whereby most of the investment on road infrastructure development in the occupied Palestinian territories end up remaining in Israel or going back to American contractors that implement these 'development' projects, in the form of contractors costs and material or inflated salaries.

neutral description of various prerequisites to economic growth and statehood.

The last case builds on a rare series of demonstrations in early 2012 by a group of Palestinian activists protesting the recurring increase in electricity prices in the West Bank (chapter six). These protests suddenly rendered visible the realm of techno-politics invisibly embedded within wires, meters and policy documents. They brought attention not only to the latest attempts of the Palestinian Authority to reform and privatize the electricity sector but also to a broader colonial legacy of electrification that has consolidated a profound relation of dependency and inequality. Taking cue from the shift brought about by the previous case, this study focused on the PA, local authorities in the West Bank, Palestinian private and foreign corporate capital, the World Bank and international donors in ways that tied these actors to electricity reform plans, consumers, utility service providers, military planners, as well as wires and prepaid meters. This analysis is perhaps the most accomplished of all cases in so far as it was able to (more) harmoniously bring together various human and non-human actors, broader colonial and capitalist processes, the symbolic and the material and the past with the present. If the methods used to collect information about electricity reform were the standard ones (that is expert and unstructured interviews, studying reports, participant observation, etc.) the historical material of this study was to a large extent the outcome of a fortuitous encounter with Kate Rouhana in 2007. Kate graciously offered archival, notes and other material collected from an unfinished project in the mid-80s concerning the political and economic pressures by the Israeli authorities on the Jerusalem District Electricity Company. This material, together with further interviews and investigation of primary and secondary sources about the history and geographies of the development of electricity grids in Palestine opened up an entire and unexplored world about the centrality of electrification for the consolidation, reproduction and commodification of settler colonialism.

Finally, a caveat here is that without participant observation it would not have been possible to come out with the fine-grained observations and analysis this dissertation required and offers. In addition to more than six years of regular trips to Palestine and nearly a hundred interviews, traveling through Palestinian and settler-only roads –with taxi drivers, friends, or with personnel from UN OCHA, Peace Now and other organizations—experiencing electricity and water cuts and witnessing the nature and problems of electricity grids –with experts and frustrated consumers—putting myself into the shoes of local residents (although with a European passport) by experiencing the closure regime, or even hiking through the beautiful valleys of

Palestine–-with the Shatha group and other friends; all significantly contributed to decipher a seemingly banal infrastructural landscape of tunnels, roads, passages, low voltage line, power stations, prepaid meters, quarries, earth mounds, roadblocks, etc. These 'excursions', together with countless informal talks with Palestinians and Israelis, brought life, meaning and sense to the sometimes abstract, complex and surrealistic journey through the materialities of settler colonialism and uneven development.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The core of the dissertation is structured in two parts –roadscapes and electricityscapes—each containing two chapters. These couplets use and engage with distinctive controversies around road and electricity infrastructure in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Each story follows an infrastructure in ways that offer a window into the entangled nature, actors, discourses and outcomes of settler colonialism and uneven development. Some chapters trace a larger historical genealogy of infrastructure construction and government and others focus more on the contemporary moment. Together, they span more than half a century of historical and geographical processes, mostly from the late 1967 occupation to the present day. Although individual actors play across the chapters that follow, it is the infrastructure projects in which they are embedded and their role and position in these broader assemblages that centers the attention of these stories. Overall the chapters illustrate roads and electricity as the material product of social, political, economic and spatial relations. Although each chapter organises discrete sets of empirical and theoretical material, all reflect thematic intersections that in some cases continue from where the previous chapter left off, and in others introduce new related inquiries and concerns. The paragraphs below provide an outline of the contents of each of the following four chapters, their relationship to each other, and a rationale for the particular structuring of the material. This section also introduces two essays located in the appendices that give further background material to the processes, dynamics and nature of settler colonialism and uneven development in Palestine.

The opening chapter, "Road 443: cementing dispossession, normalizing segregation and disrupting everyday life",[17] looks at how roads become political and the ways they are imagined, experienced and contested in the West Bank. The chapter historicizes infrastructure by looking into the imaginative geographies of the road –both in the early stages of Zionism and after the 1967 occupation— and their vital importance to

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[17] Paper forthcoming as book chapter in Graham, S. and McFarlane, C. (Eds.) *Infrastructural Lives: Politics, Experience and the Urban Fabric*. Earthscan-Routledge (2015)

consolidate settler colonialism. It looks at how roads are constituted in past and present colonial discourses of modernity, development, legality, and security in an attempt to make natural, legitimate and inevitable the production of Israel´s settler space. The case of Road 443 is vital for it provides an entry point into the often-neglected history of the first Israeli road plans in the West Bank, because it captures the scale, political and destructive nature of material artefacts that were seen at the time as problematic as the wall is today, and for it constitutes the first case to be brought into the Israeli Supreme Court under accusations of apartheid. Scrutinizing the plans and court case that preceded the development of Road 443 as well as its current uses and restrictions, this chapter suggests that road infrastructure is an outcome and a means of the project of colonial settlement and modernization, but also a mirror of the social and political form of the settler state. Another significant aspect that emerges from this chapter is the relevance of the law not only as a tool to normalize and justify the dispossession resulting from road building, but also as an active agent involved in the production of space and the segregation of the indigenous population. By paying particular attention to the everyday life experiences of the Palestinians the chapter stresses how roads effectively obscure a larger story of struggle against conquest, dispossession, exploitation and destruction. As such, this chapter sets the stage for the next chapters in so far as it depicts infrastructures as complex and dynamic assemblages rather than static objects which ultimately produce political effects.

The second chapter, "When settler colonialism becomes 'development': 'fabric of life' roads and the spatialities of development",[18] takes a different approach and case study as a way to bring new actors and processes into the study of infrastructures in Palestine. It explores the construction by the Israeli Government, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and the USAID, of a Palestinian network of segregated roads in the aftermath of the Oslo agreements. In using this case, the chapter focuses on the ways 'development' materializes in space consolidating racialized landscapes in the West Bank and the role that Palestinian development projects and inter/national actors have in the reproduction and consolidation of settler colonialism and uneven development. It analyses how these infrastructure projects are materially and symbolically constructed and legitimized and the ways 'development' is transformed into a mechanism to deal with short-term Palestinian needs arising from the imperatives of settler colonialism. It shows how the fabric of life roads and its associated closure regime is incorporated into the rituals of Palestinian state building and neoliberal

[18] Paper included as book chapter in Jabary Salamanca, O. and Tabar, L. (Eds.) *After Oslo: Settler Colonialism, Neoliberal Development and Decolonization.* Institute of Palestine Studies (book and paper under review)

development in ways that transform colonial infrastructure into a neutral description of various prerequisites to economic growth and statehood. The chapter shows how infrastructures are bundled with broader geopolitical and geoeconomic processes and the capacity of these socio-material networks to hold a developmentalist vision that in practice is productive of segregation patterns. The chapter complicates accounts about occupation and breaks from simplistic binaries that tend to neglect the myriad interests and demands of a multiplicity of actors rarely brought into view. Ultimately, the chapter explores how development practice in Palestine comes to signify the corollary of a systematic process of dispossession, in other words, how settler colonialism solicits (and receives) the support of a cohort of international development actors and financial institutions to effectively sustain and reproduce itself, that is how settler colonialism becomes development.

The third chapter, "Unplug and Play: manufacturing collapse in Gaza",[19] shifts attention from the development of road grids in the West Bank to the governance practices and misuse of electricity grids and the destruction of the power plant in the Gaza Strip. It exposes the ways in which, in the wake of the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza strip, the Israeli government manipulated and destroyed electricity infrastructure as a political tool to create and regulate a humanitarian crisis. The chapter develops a preliminary account about the ways infrastructures are used as geopolitical sites to assert spatial control and as biopolitical tools to regulate and suppress life. These networks not only appear as colonial umbilical cords that facilitate the exercise of power and the instrumentalization over both population and territory, they enforce an enduring dependency. It looks at the mobilization of discourses, strategies and doctrines that criminalize these essential utilities as 'terrorist infrastructure', turning these networks into political, 'legal', and military targets. The destruction of Gaza's power plant and the subsequent sanctions on fuel supplies are used as an example to explore the wider political and public health implications of targeting these life-support systems, and also, the extent to which infrastructure brings the politics of colonial occupation to the very spaces of daily life practice. Finally, the chapter reflects upon the idea of 'infrastructural violence' and its role in the current humanitarian catastrophe. In deconstructing a particular historical event and its subsequent unfolding dynamics, the chapter ultimately highlights the ways settler colonial violence, in its discursive and material dimensions, is inscribed in physical space as well as in everyday life.

[19] Paper published as Jabary Salamanca, O. (2011). "Unplug and play: manufacturing collapse in Gaza", *Human Geography,* 4(1):22-37.

The final chapter, "Hooked on electricity: the charged political economy of electrification in Palestine",[20] takes a broader look at electricity grids in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank putting emphasis on fundamental questions around the nature and consequences of electrification in a settler colonial context undergoing profound neoliberal transformations. In bringing together two constitutive and complementary moments in the history of the electrification of Palestine, the chapter traces the grounding of colonial conditions of dependency-cum-dispossession, mainly after the 1967 occupation, and the reproduction and commodification of these conditions with the electricity reform that followed the neoliberal turn under Oslo. It explores the political nature, spatial configurations and path-dependency logics underpinning the development and governance of these infrastructure networks in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Adopting a critical political economy approach, the chapter lays out a theoretical discussion about what electrification can tell us about the entangled nature of settler colonialism and capitalist forms of neoliberal development in Palestine. It illustrates how the ongoing neoliberal reform is taking root with negligible consideration of the embedded inequalities that have characterized the electricity landscape since the early days of Zionist settler colonialism. Equally important to this chapter are the ways in which processes of electrification have been greatly contested. The historical approach to the assemblage of electricity networks shows, on the one hand, the myriad of processes and actors that are made invisible throughout its construction and, on the other, how electrification comes to matter politically, economically and socially. As such, the central contribution of this chapter is to emphasize the often-neglected centrality of electrification to Israel imperatives of settler colonialism, to capitalist modes of production and expansion, and to the reproduction of relations of dependency and inequality.

In the conclusions, the dissertation presents a summary of the arguments of the thesis, identifies limitations of the research and analysis, and highlights directions for future research. Not surprisingly, most of the limitations of the conceptual and analytical framework and the acknowledged boundaries of research and analysis suggest interesting avenues for future work. In particular, the discussion focuses on issues related to Palestine studies, concluding with thoughts on how a more detailed exploration of these issues carries implications for further development of the analytical framework presented here as well as for opening spaces of political possibility.

[20] Paper forthcoming as Jabary Salamanca, O. (2015) "Hooked on electricity: the charged political economy of electrification in Palestine". *Journal of Palestine Studies* (under review)

Finally, the appendices include two papers that provide further material into two of the core issues of this dissertation, settler colonialism and neoliberal development in Palestine. The first, "Past is Present. Settler Colonialism in Palestine",[21] constitutes the introduction of a special issue that emerged out of a conference on settler colonialism organized by the Palestine Society and the London Middle East Institute at the School of Oriental and African Studies. The paper underlines both the reasons behind the decline in the use of a settler colonial framework in Palestine studies as well as the scholar and political importance of re-claiming this framework today. The second paper, "After Oslo: Settler Colonialism, Neoliberal Development and Liberation,"[22] is also an introduction to a special issue that emerged from a three year process that began in 2010 with an international conference held at Birzeit University under the title "Geographies of Aid Intervention in Palestine" –organized by the Center for Development Studies (Birzeit University) and the Middle East and North Africa Research Group (Ghent University) with the support of the Flemish Interuniversity Council. This was followed by a research program on "Alternatives to mainstream Development and Neoliberalism in Palestine" carried out by the Center for Development Studies with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. The introduction, and the special issue more broadly, propose a critical lens through which we can begin to unsettle and rethink the foundations for development theory and practice in Palestine. It stems from a concern with the fundamental flaws of the development apparatus that accompanied Oslo's 'false decolonization' – an apparatus that has persistently silenced and neglected the political realities on the ground and, most problematically, has contributed to sustaining and exacerbating the structures of settler colonialism and apartheid while enforcing rapacious neoliberal policies.

[21] This paper was published as Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie, Sobhi Samour (2012) Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine. *Settler Colonial Studies,* 2(1), 1-8. The special issue was written and edited collectively so all the authors contributed equally to the outcome. All authors have agreed to the incorporation of the introductory piece in this dissertation.

[22] This paper is the introduction of an edited book by Omar Jabary Salamanca and Linda Tabar titled *After Oslo. Settler Colonialism, Neoliberal Development and Liberation* and currently under review by the Institute of Palestine Studies. The introduction and the editing of the papers included in this book proposal were written and edited collectively so both authors contributed equally to the outcome. All authors have agreed to the incorporation of this piece into the dissertation.

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Roadscapes

CHAPTER TWO

Road 443: cementing dispossession, normalizing segregation and disrupting everyday life

INTRODUCTION

Those who have read Douglas Adams's book "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" (2002) might remember the surreal opening section where Arthur Dent wakes up in his housecoat to confront an army of bulldozers ready to make way for a bypass road over his house. Arthur´s initial surprise and anger are quickly interrupted by the prospect of a significantly more dramatic scenario with the appearance of thousands of construction ships hanging motionless in the sky. All of a sudden a god-like voice breaks off: "This is Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz of the Galactic Hyperspace Planning Council. As you will no doubt be aware, the plans for development of the outlying regions of the Galaxy require the building of a hyperspatial express route through your star system, and regrettably your planet is one of those scheduled for demolition. The process will take slightly less than two of your Earth minutes. Thank you."(Douglas, 2002:25) As chaos spread on planet earth the voice interjected again: "There's no point in acting all surprised about it. All the planning charts and demolition orders have been on display in your local planning department on Alpha Centauri for fifty of your Earth years, so you've had plenty of time to lodge any formal complaint and it's far too late to start making a fuss about it now." (Douglas, 2002:25).

The Palestinian experience with Israel's road building in the colonial 'frontier' is not surreal as Adam's account but rather the crude and Kafkaesque reality of a people facing permanent dispossession. The West Bank's southern Ramallah district is a case in point. In the early 1980s the Israeli government decided to confiscate private land from a Palestinian teacher's cooperative in the occupied West Bank for the purpose of building an express route – 'Road 443'. As in Douglas Adam's story it turns out that the planned road, which had not been previously revealed nor officially approved, was part of a larger highway system that explicitly aimed at annexing the West Bank into Israel – 'Road Plan 50'. The new motorway was to be built virtually in its entirety through occupied territories upgrading a thoroughfare, dating back to the days of the British Mandate, which passed through several Palestinian villages. This highway was meant as a Northeast-to-Southwest corridor that would enable easier and faster settler mobility between the metropolitan region of Tel Aviv and the Israeli colonies scattered along the road and around the Jerusalem area (see Figure 2). The plan met resistance from Palestinians who filed a legal petition to halt the

construction on the grounds that the road, as a permanent structure, was illegal under international humanitarian law[23]. Ironically, the Israeli High Court of Justice endorsed the project reasoning that the road can be built, as its primary aim was to serve the local Palestinian population. Two decades later, soon after the outbreak of the second intifada (September, 2000), the Israeli government imposed access restrictions to Road 443. These restrictions, overtime, gradually became permanent resulting in a total ban on Palestinian access to the road. The actual road ban was not published nor made official until Palestinians, once again, took the Israeli government to the High Court in 2007. The legal case lasted several years amidst Palestinian demonstrations and demands for an unconditional, immediate and total removal of the restrictions. Yet in another performance of legal acrobatics, as we shall see, the Court de facto endorsed the ban thus implicitly sanctioning segregation.

At present, while Palestinians remain banned from using Road 443, some 40,000 Israeli commuters use the road daily unobstructed. For many commuters and travellers this thoroughfare is ostensibly as ordinary as any other highway is often assumed to be; a modern motorway with four lanes, intersections, gas stations, signs and lightening, as well as an array of background infrastructure such as electricity poles or telecommunication antennas. Few are aware that this road effectively conceals an ongoing colonial history and a crude socio-political reality that lies beneath the mundane asphalt layer and behind the roadblocks, fences, and gates that close access for Palestinians living on the sides of this major thoroughfare.

Figure 2: Road 443 and Highway 1 cutting across the West Bank boundary (in black) (Source: Google Maps)

[23] Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as an occupier force, does not have the authority to make far-reaching changes in the territories as, in principle, any occupation is supposed to be temporary.

This case elicits several questions with regards to the assemblage of road infrastructure in colonial contexts, the processes and actors that are made invisible through their construction, and the impacts on the everyday life of those who are subjected to its violence. More specifically, what are the overlapping discourses of modernization, development, legality and security that constitute the materialities of the road? How does the construction and differential access policies to these transportation networks enforce particular patterns of dispossession and segregation? Similarly how is the everyday live of Palestinians affected by particular road bureaucracies? Or to what extent can the production of these networks be contested in a context of asymmetric power relations? This chapter seeks to explore these questions in three modes. First by addressing the role of road infrastructure in the production of settler space in Palestine. This is done in light of two bodies of scholarship: the burgeoning literature that places Palestine within a settler colonial paradigm and the recent geography debates around infrastructure networks in postcolonial contexts. Secondly by looking at the symbolic and material geographies of roads. Here a detailed study about the genealogy of Road 443 is complemented with a brief description of the origins of road infrastructure in the early stages of Zionist settlement in pre-1967 Palestine. This section posits the case of Road 443 within the context of the larger Israeli road plans for the West Bank, thereby exposing the colonial and political nature of these networks. The third part of the essay addresses the experiences of those affected by the construction of Road 443 and the different mechanisms and mobility regimes that contribute to normalizing the disruption of everyday life. This section also looks at how these ruptures are contested and at times subverted. Finally, the conclusion considers the implications of the findings.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE PRODUCTION OF SETTLER COLONIAL SPACE

Over the course of the 20th century, roads have shaped the material, political, economic, and socio-cultural landscapes of colonies around the globe. The expansion of roads symbolized progress and modernity as well as crucial forms of colonial and military power. New road networks replaced the tyranny of distance and inaccessibility with a tyranny of proximity that made indigenous populations legible to the colonial state, and their natural resources available for exploitation (Edwards, 2006:427; Scoot, 1999). These networks defined highly uneven landscapes, bypassing indigenous populations and connecting colonial centers, but they also shaped colonial life and experiences in fundamental ways. As Masquelier (2002:829) argues, the construction of roads was in many ways the first, most enduring and violent aspect of colonialism. Roads are thus complex and far-reaching technologies that

are embedded in larger political, economic and socio-cultural frameworks(Freed, 2010:205). Despite the importance of these networks, the existing literature has tended to downplay the importance of roads in favor of other infrastructure such as railroads or water projects. A reading of the materiality of roads in relation to the colonial state allows us thus to trace how these networks constitute and transform settler colonial space.

In the Palestinian context, various studies have consistently argued that roads are a defining feature of the colonial and segregationist policies of the state of Israel. In fact, whereas colonial outposts were essential for the early Zionist expansionist endeavour, it was roads that paved the way to the 'frontier'. As Meron Benvenisti puts it, "the actual 'pioneer' that 'goes before the camp' has been the yellow bulldozer and the lengthening ribbon of asphalt behind it"(Benvenisti, 2007:36). Back in the mid 1980s, Benvenisti and Khayat (1988) noted how roads in the West Bank facilitated the 'creeping annexation' of Palestinian lands into Israel, pointing at the development in practice of two parallel roads systems, one for Jewish settlers and another for Palestinians. This massive infrastructural system effectively constitutes an umbilical cord that enables and feed the settlement enterprise, connects colonies to each other, and incorporates these 'wild' territories as part of the Israeli expansionist state. In this sense, roads, like electricity or water infrastructure, are what Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar (2007:XV) describe as "the elixir of life for the settlements [and] the secret of their power". Moreover, these grids act as 'sunken walls' that give life to Israeli colonial designs dividing the Palestinian territories into an archipelago of discontinuous enclaves, while simultaneously spatializing the exclusivist and segregationist nature of the settler society (Weizman, 2007). For these networks, as we shall see, are ultimately tantamount to the production of new socio-spatial relations, boundaries and hierarchies. Yet these thoroughfares are not only aimed at annexing and 'domesticating' the territory of the Palestinian 'other', they also render this 'strange' place familiar within the settler imaginary. Eyal Weizman (2007) suggests that the visual language of 'colonial facts' helps to naturalize infrastructural projects and make them appear as organic parts of the Israeli state. In this way roads are, as Jeff Halper notes, "massive, permanent structures; they flow, giving the feeling of 'natural' connections with no artificial borders, yet they claim land by their very routes; they are banal and can be made to look inoffensive and even benign and attractive" (Halper, 2000). This potential of abstraction in roads is precisely what makes possible a distortion of the deeply political nature of these networks and how they enable settler narratives of belonging and territorial claims of expansion over its very paths.

While roads enable a sense of settler belonging and territorial possession this infrastructural assemblage cut two ways as roads bring vicious destruction through their calculated paths. From the standpoint of the Palestinian population, roadways represent more than bypasses between places: these networks effectively shape native space as they leave behind violent traces of forced removal, dispossession and segregation of the indigenous urban and rural classes. As Shamira Shah notes, more than four decades of road construction in the West Bank have resulted in massive land theft, house demolitions, denial of urban growth, towns cut off from each other and from their service centres, and wanton destruction of the landscape. Once laid out, these enduring artefacts alter the *status quo* of the colonized territories, further undermining the possibility of indigenous sovereignty over their land (Shah, 1997). At the same time, the traditional Palestinian road network has often been the target of state-led destruction. As Stephen Graham (2003) puts it, state-led infrastructure destruction is an attempt at forced de-modernization of the Palestinian society. The rolling out of layers of gravel and asphalt to constitute settler space is thus premised upon a logic of 'destructive creation': one that requires the material and symbolic erasure of indigenous geographies to make way for the new settler society.

The body of work addressing road infrastructure in the Palestinian context has been particularly attentive to geopolitics and violence. Its main concern has been to make visible the political nature of roads while bringing this infrastructure together with notions of power, sovereignty, space and borders. However two aspects remain largely absent from this literature. First, these studies rarely explore in which ways the development of road infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza reflect prior patterns and polices of Israeli colonial settlement in pre-1967 Palestine –Israel proper. These rigid spatial and temporal boundaries, which derive mostly from the predominance of the occupation framework, tend to blur the past and present dynamics of Israel's colonial infrastructure. A burgeoning literature that revives the 'settler colonial' paradigm for the study of Palestine provides a useful lens to address these spatial and temporal limitations (Shafir, 1996; Veracini, 2006; Jabary Salamanca et al., 2012). Locating Palestine–in its entirety— as a site of ongoing settler colonialism this body of work sees contemporary realities as over-determined by the deep structures that Zionism put into place since its establishment. As John Collins explains, these spatial, social, political and economic structures are the persistent defining characteristic and even the condition of possibility of the contemporary Israeli state (Collins, 2011). Looking at road networks as signifiers of the evolution in time and space of Israel's settler colonial practice can thus shed some light on the symbolic and material aspects that today inform these urbanizing polities in the West Bank 'frontier'.

Second, these studies have paid little attention to the myriad of actors and complex processes that define the road and to the ways in which the construction of roads is contested and at times subverted, or how they come to matter to everyday life. To do this, as Mcfarlane and Rutherford contend, a historized analysis of infrastructure development is crucial to understanding the contested genealogy and political continuities and discontinuities that inform these networks in, nominally, postcolonial contexts (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008). Thus taking into consideration the social-political dimensions and repercussions of road development helps us to foreground the materiality of infrastructure as it is experienced by those it dispossesses spatially and socially. This attention to bodies, mobility and everyday life, as Joan Long suggests, might contribute to alter the predominance of macro-level debates in Palestine studies, "exposing the intimate biopolitical geographies through which those [Israeli] agendas are pursued and contested" (Long, 2011: 268; see also Harker, 2011).

"WE SHALL DRESS YOU WITH ROBES OF CONCRETE AND CEMENT"

Modern infrastructure and ambitious engineering proposals are central to the symbolic and material geographies of Zionism (Tal, 2008; Efron, 2011). Since the earliest nineteenth century visions of ideologues, surveyors and engineers, the laying of infrastructure over Palestine was understood by the leaders of the Zionist project as a precondition to build a new Jewish settler society. The need to "redeem the empty land" and make "the desert bloom" was necessarily premised upon the perception that infrastructure (as technology) would transform the existing natural conditions (Veracini, 2010:182).[24] In the process of constructing this symbolic geography, Jewish settlers rendered the Palestinian populations invisible transforming their habitat into a topographic *tabula rasa* on which to carve their modern and rational infrastructural grid plans. Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism, projected this infrastructural imaginary onto the future in his manifesto about the Jewish state: "The poorest will go first to cultivate the soil. In accordance with a preconceived plan, they will construct roads, bridges, railways and telegraph installations; regulate rivers; and build their own dwellings; their labour will create trade, trade will create markets and markets will attract new settlers" (Herzl 1988: 26). Herzl, as well as other Zionist ideologues, believed nevertheless that building settler space was as much an effort at "taming" the "wild" nature of the land, as it was to transform Jewish settlers themselves into "new human beings and a better society" (Massad, 2005:4). Chaim Weizmann, president of the Zionist organization and first president of the state of Israel, understood that, "A country is acquired in the pain of a struggle

[24] This is what Veracini calls the 'anticipatory geographies' of settler colonialism

against all obstacles. This sort of suffering we have not been permitted to experience in the various lands of our dispersion. In Palestine, we know the pain of drying the swamps, laying the roads, putting up tents and fighting the natural elements. That is why, in relation to us, the world conceives Palestine as something different from New York or Warsaw" (Krane, 2002). Zionist thinkers believed, as was the case of other settler-national projects (Edwads, 2003), that Jewish pioneers could simultaneously transform themselves as they transformed the land through the construction, in pain and glory, of roads, bridges and other engineering projects.[25] Infrastructure development was thus crucial to achieve the promise of national redemption.

This is perhaps best shown in the case of road construction that, as Tom Selwyn (2001:230) points out, was considered a heroic effort to establish ‘facts on the ground’. Selwyn (ibid) explains how “road building was accompanied by a whole culture of songs and stories about the brigades which forged the transport infrastructure that made possible the establishment of the state itself.” The production of this mythology is best articulated in the Israeli classic *Kalaniyout*, a popular song by Nathan Alterman written in the days leading to the establishment of the State of Israel: ‘‘We shall plant and build you, our beloved country, we shall beautify your mighty; we shall dress you with robes of cement and concrete.’’ (Werczberger, 2011:283). Road infrastructure is in this way constitutive of distinctive forms of colonial subjectivity and collective identity formation. In deed, on the one hand these emancipatory networks enabled the project of urban modernity that characterizes and differentiates the settler enterprise from the ‘backward’ conditions of the land and peoples to be conquered. And on the other it articulated the mythological links between the Jewish people and the ‘Land of Israel’ (Palestine) through a territorialization of sovereignty claims.

The imaginative geographies that underpin road development conceal however the actual sites where colonial processes of dispossession and repossession are practiced. Road infrastructure has been crucial to facilitating and sustaining the making of Jewish settler space and simultaneously the unmaking of Palestinian native space. This profound socio-spatial redefinition has its origins in the three decades of British Mandate (1917-1948), which brought to Palestine ‘modern’ planning schemes and transportation plans. The British built an extensive and well-developed road network that was used to enhance the export capacity of the colony, to facilitate the movement of troops and police, as well as to extend control over inaccessible and ‘lawless’ areas (Shaw, 1991:859 and Aharoni, 1991:67).[26] Yet the British were not the only

[25] see also Sufian (2007) for a similar example on identity construction through swamp draining
[26] The British expanded the paved road network built during the Ottoman Empire from 230 km to 2,600 km in 1945.

ones building roads during the Mandate period. In fact, the Zionist Committee, which advised and helped the British Government to implement and develop infrastructure projects of Jewish interest in Palestine, had its own 'Construction and Public works' arm – Solel Boneh. These projects included, among others, the strategic roads from Safed to Tzemah, Haifa to Jaffa, or Jaffa to Jerusalem. In 1948, when the Israeli state was born, the new Government decided to continue the British tradition of road building, which was cheaper and faster to develop than railways. Roads became in deed Israel's preferred tool of expansion and the main means of bringing the periphery within reach of the state (Rabinowitz, 2004). Solel Boneh, in cooperation with several organizations from the Zionist establishment –namely the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish National Fund and Keren Hayesod—were key in preparing the land before settlement; they provided the construction of roads, the supply of water and electricity, and drainage of swaps when necessary. These actors conceive transportation networks as a way to facilitate Jewish settlement through the 'frontier' and to extend sovereignty over the Palestinian expropriated lands being annexed in the construction process. In fact, during the first decades of the Israeli state, the layout of roads served to fragment and dispossess the remaining Palestinian population, predominantly in Arab Galille (Zureik, 1988:99; Zureik, 1979). It is in this way that road infrastructure makes natural and inevitable the progressive nature of the Zionist undertaking. As Dan Rabinowitz emphasizes, "transportation and, to a lesser degree, electricity and telephone infrastructure […] shadowed the pattern of [early] settlement instigated by the nationalizing project" (Zureik 1988:33). Roads serve, as Henri Lefebvre (1991) would say, to naturalize power in space obscuring its very operations and effects.

ROAD TO ZION: "DUNAM AFTER DUNAM"[27]

The philosophy of Zionism to redeem the land and produce settler space is one of pragmatism and flexibility. The territory is conquered one road at a time, as the song goes, "a dunam here and a dunam there"(Avnery, 2005). Road building has demonstrated over time the effectiveness of this policy. Today Israel's road network is a comprehensive layout that covers and connects poles of settlement throughout all the territory, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Yet to see this colonial network as a highly planned and consistent project obscures the processes that constitute this infrastructure and both overestimate and underestimate its power. The historiography of Road 443 highlights how the construction of roads is not as coherent as it is sometimes made out to be but rather a messy and contingent process where different actors modify and learn from one another, but also react and come up with

[27]Turkish measure still used in Palestine/Israel that is equal to 1000 square meters.

novel solutions to specific problems. In particular, this case provides an illustrative example of the ways in which the materiality and legal/political aspects of road infrastructure constitute one another. And it also shows the intrinsic violence and geographies of dispossession resulting from its development.

The existence of a plan for building 'Road 443' surfaced in an unusual way in 1980 after a Palestinian teachers' cooperative took the military administration to the Israeli High Court of Justice for freezing their permits to build a housing complex in the area of Qalandia, north of Jerusalem (ISC, 1983). The permits were legally obtained from the military administration through the customary procedures and construction had already begun. The reason given for freezing the permits was that the cooperative had submitted individual permits allegedly hiding their intentions to build an entire neighbourhood (Wolfson, 2009). The court initially validated the administration´s decision and demanded the cooperative to submit a complete plan for the entire project. Eventually, the court revoked the housing permits and the entire master plan. Interestingly the reasons given by the Judge for the refusal did not relate to the initial allegations. In fact, the whole project was rejected on the basis that it was too close to the industrial Israeli colony of Atarot and most importantly because the existence of a plan to build a road and a large intersection nearby (Wolfson, 2009). It is worth noting that the road plan had not yet received planning approval nor had it been previously published. The court's justification was based both on a 'security' rational and on the 'need' to build a permanent infrastructure for the 'benefit' of the local population. For the teacher's cooperative the ruling meant a legal burial of the housing project. Yet once the details for the new highway were made available the plan became the subject of a second petition against the confiscation of the cooperative lands for this purpose.

The Israeli proposal, as presented in court, consisted in upgrading a regional road cutting through the West Bank. Road 443, originally paved during the British Mandate, was a major artery passing through and connecting several Palestinian villages in the area to Ramallah and Jerusalem on the East and Jaffa and Tel Aviv in the West. The plan redefined the traditional path of the road in order to bypass the exiting Palestinian villages. The military administration in the occupied territories defended the new highway on the grounds that a new road system will address the increasing traffic needs of the Palestinian population providing a rapid link to communities throughout the West Bank. It noted as well that the road would serve not only Palestinians but also Israeli traffic between the West Bank and Israel, benefiting in particular the increasing number of Palestinian commuters working in Israel. Ironically, the State claimed that "The military government's role,

fifteen years after it was established, cannot be limited to preserving an old and out-dated road system … [otherwise] it would have been rightly accused of freezing development and preventing the natural development of the Area [West Bank and Gaza] and its population."(ISC, 1983). Moreover, the new motorway was justified as an effort to improve the life of the Palestinian indigenous population and to contribute to meet the standards of a modern and civilized society (ibid). In this way the project was presented as a 'cooperation project' between Israel and the West Bank to be cofounded partly by taxes collected from the occupied population and partly by Israel.

The Israeli High Court of Justice endorsed each one of the arguments presented by the military administration recurring to "a long list of seemingly progressive rules whose illusory nature continues to be exposed to this day" (Wolfson, 2009). Although the Judge had his reservations with regards to the order of priorities advanced by the state to justify the road— that is the 'needs' of the occupied population instead of the 'security needs' of the occupiers— he nevertheless argued that "there is no basis for doubting the authenticity of the planning considerations presented by the authorities". The lands of the teachers' cooperative were finally confiscated and, adding insult to injury, the cooperative was obliged to pay the expenses of the trial, including the fees of the military administration. Yet there is one important aspect that the ruling failed to address: the highway was only a section of a larger national highway plan –not disclosed during the process—that eventually would entail a *de facto* incorporation of the entire West Bank into Israel. By doing this, the court endorsed the plan, even if implicitly, masking and legalizing the broader catastrophic consequences that its development will have for the Palestinian population.

Indeed, in February 1984, a year after the ruling, it became clear that Road 443 was an intrinsic component of 'road plan 50'. The plan encompassed and materialized previous strategic attempts to colonize the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. It was this plan that the High Court of Justice was referring to in the previous case when resolving that: "Once the commanding officer decided to prepare an all embracing road-plan one cannot see this as an illegal act, especially since in the opinion of the court, this was done in the interest of the local population."(Shehaded et al., 1984:2). The Israeli Defence and Housing Ministries and the Military Administration, in cooperation with settler organizations, prepared the plan excluding all Palestinian participation. Its explicit goals were two-fold. On the one had, it aimed at giving material legibility to the messianic idea that the West Bank – the biblical land of Judea and Samaria in Zionist terminology– was an intrinsic part of the 'Land of Israel'. And on the other, to legitimize

colonial dispossession through an overarching road network that would consolidate settlement expansion, enable the mobility of a Jewish army of suburban pioneers and facilitate the connection of colonies between each other and to Israel. Moreover it intended to ensure that Palestinian areas "would be isolated and their growth would be hindered by [a] massive road network and non settler Israeli presence." (Shah, 1997). All facts that obviously run contrary to the allegations repeatedly adopted by the Israeli Government to justify the construction of Road 443 and that expose the expansionist intentions behind the highway system. The plan was disclosed in the West Bank local newspaper: it was presented as a legal undertaking, in accordance with the Jordanian law, to readapt the network to new needs and modernizing an aging infrastructure that will benefit the local population. By 1986, 88 kilometres of the plan's roads had already being built over thousands of dunums of Palestinian expropriated land, often without providing the population with the right to submit any objections to the building of these roads (Shehadeh et al., 1984).

Road plan 50 was considered at the time as big a threat as today's Apartheid Wall in terms of land expropriation, economic and environmental impacts, and social fragmentation. A report produced and submitted to the UN by Al-Haq, a Palestinian Human Rights organization, emphasized that "the proposed system will serve none of the 20 major Palestinian towns and cities in the West Bank, but will skirt around them, cutting them off from municipal land earmarked for development or from land now in agricultural use on which the towns are dependent" (Shehadeh et al. 1984). Moreover, the total area of 600 km of roads –in addition to disproportionate widths and unnecessary buffer zones on the sides— was estimated in 37,200 ha; roughly the built-up area of the West Bank at the time which was 43,000 ha. Everything falling under the width and buffer of a planned road could be subjected to building prohibition, confiscation, cease of use and demolition. Al-Haq documented the total value of the destruction in two representative 10 km sections (see Figure 3) of the proposed plan at an estimated cost of 15.6 million dinars (39 million dollars at 1984 prices)(Coon, 1990:368). For Palestinians in the West Bank this meant that land expropriation for building the network would amount to more than a billion dollars. Road 443 provided a vivid example of the consequences of this plan when in 1988 the Israeli authorities began construction. As endorsed by the court, the original route was altered to bypass the Palestinian villages of Beit Ur al-Fauka, Beit Ur at-Tahta, and Beit Sira, ensuring that settlers will be prevented from driving through these areas. The construction of the highway meant seizing agricultural lands and uprooting thousands of olive and fruit trees from the nearby villages.

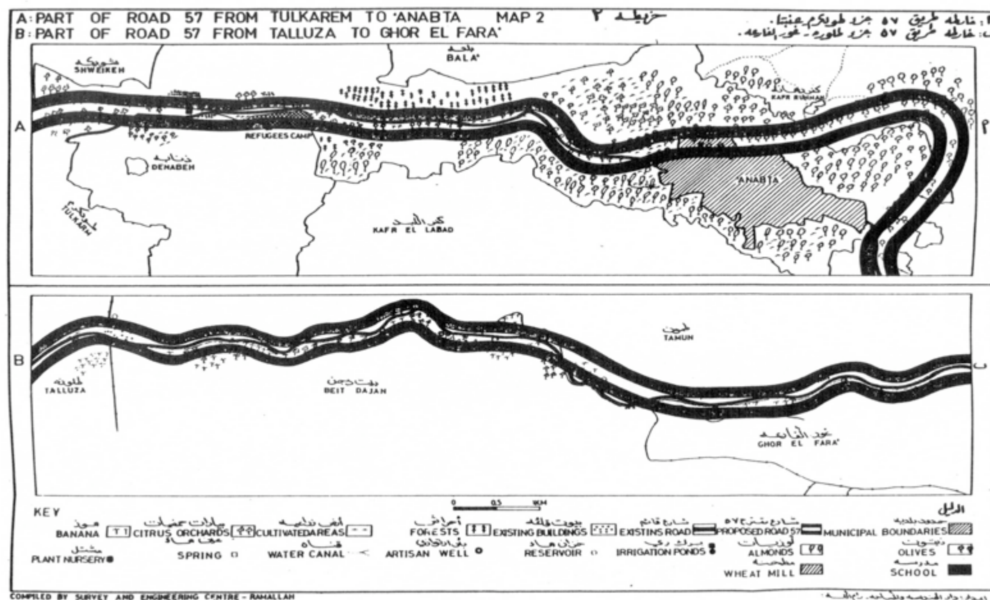

Figure 3: Israeli road sections planned over Palestinian agricultural and urban areas. (Source: Al-Haq)

The rationale that derives from this case exposes two important aspects. Firstly, the road is presented as a modernizing and development endeavour effectively concealing the politics invested in such a large infrastructural project, and the territorialization and expansion of the settler state throughout the 'frontier'. Secondly, the reification and complicity of a legal apparatus infused in enlightened and benevolent discourse whereby the parameters of customary international law served to justify the permanent –as oppose to 'temporary'—nature of settler occupation. Road 443 appears thus not only as a physical object but rather as a hybrid of facts and norms, materiality and legality, and physicality and ideology[28]. The road needs thus to be understood in the context of the legal and political/ideological aspects that constitute its production and enable the enforcement of spatialities of dispossession.

FROM DISPOSSESION TO SEGREGATION: EXPERIENCING 'BUREAUCRACIES OF EVIL'

The first Intifada erupted in 1987 as a mass Palestinian uprising across the West Bank and Gaza against decades of Israeli settler colonial policies. The uprising challenged the normalcy of relentless Israeli efforts to annex territory and erase the 'green line'[29] physically and symbolically. Suddenly, the illusion of 'frictionless' and 'enlightened'

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[28] For a similar discussion on the Wall see Yishai Blank "Legalizing the Barrier: the Legality and Materiality of the Israel/Palestine Separation Barrier" *Texas International Law Journal* 46 (2011) 309-43

[29] The 'green line' is the 1949 armistice line that 'separates' Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories, that is West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

colonialism was brought to an end and "the icy winds of reality blew through the cosy network of [settler] politics and infrastructure"(Shaw-Smith, 1994:1). The early prospects of a 'normal life' and the idea of seamless travel, between colonial suburbs in the 'frontier' and the urban centres in Israel, turned into settler anxiety. The uprising effectively marked the impossibility of a settler colonial formula that could no longer take the land without the people, thus making segregation –ala South African Apartheid— the most viable option to consolidate and sustain Israel's thirst for land. From this moment on, the idea of *hafradat* (Hebrew for separation), which guided previous decades of Jewish settlement, began to materialize more visibly and forcefully in the spatialities and mobility bureaucracies imposed upon Palestinians. In fact, after the 1993 Oslo accords, the Israeli government revived the 'green line' (or an elastic version of it) as a powerful marker to delimit the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as 'hostile' territories. Simultaneously, Palestinian movement was characterized as a 'threat' and associated with settler vulnerability (Selwyn, 2001:233). This, in turn, signified the end of Moshe Dayan's 'open bridges' or 'free movement' policy, which until then enabled Palestinians' relative freedom of movement between the West Bank, Gaza and Israel and, in a more restricted way, to the Arab world. For Dayan, the primary architect of occupation, this strategic policy was meant as a way to conceal Israeli efforts at normalizing colonization, cancelling the 'green line' and, in his own words, to "give them [Palestinians] something to lose" (Bornstein, 2002:42). In deed, the bargaining chip of 'freedom' of movement was the first thing Palestinians lost after rising against its oppressor. As early as 1991, the state of Israel began the enforcement of strict mobility policies on the Palestinian population, both as access restrictions to Israel and mobility regulations between and within the West Bank and Gaza (Hass, 2002). The apparatus to segregate the population consisted of a myriad of measures, including personal permits and magnetic cards, the mushrooming of checkpoints across, and on the borders of, the occupied territories, and strict access regulations to virtually all Palestinian roads.

Road 443 provides again a paradigmatic illustration of the normalization over the years of Israel´s draconian mobility regulations. Following its construction in 1988, this thoroughfare developed into the major traffic artery in the southern Ramallah district, linking the villages of Beit Sira, Saffa, Beit Liqya, Kharbata al-Misbah, Beit Ur al-Tahta, and Beit Ur al-Fauka to the city of Ramallah. Road 443 became as well a popular settler highway connecting suburban colonies in the Jerusalem area and along the way to Tel Aviv, as it is shorter and less busy than the traditional alternative, Highway 1. Yet, in 2002, after the outbreak of the second Intifada, the Israeli army prohibited both pedestrian and vehicular Palestinian travel on the road, including transport of goods and cases of

medical and other emergencies. What began in the late 1990s as temporary measures banning access to Road 443, gradually became permanent facts that materialize in roadblocks, fences, gates, checkpoints and military patrols installed on the paths that connect Palestinian villages to this highway. The Israeli army justified this collective punishment as a security measure after Palestinian gunfire killed seven persons on the road in the midst of the Intifada. Gal Hirsh, the Ramallah commander at the time, proudly claimed authorship, as he put it, "I turned Route 443 into a highway for Israelis only […] I closed all the exits to the Palestinians."(HCJ, 2007). However, as Gershom Gorenenberg notes, "if the highway had really been built for local residents, the army could have taken the opposite tack—ordering Israelis not to use the road, just as it ordered them not to enter West Bank cities." (Gorenberg, 2010). These policies were not exceptional during these years. In fact, as documented by B'Tselem, an Israeli Human Rights organization, the 'forbidden roads regime' extended to most parts of the Palestinian network. Today, after restrictions have been relaxed in some West Bank roads, all the access paths connecting the villages to Road 443 remain blocked.

The harm caused to the affected villages as a result of the closure has had major implications in all aspects of Palestinian life. Currently the only existing alternative is a narrow, unsafe and tortuous road that crosses under Road 443. More than 30,000 Palestinians are obliged to use this road for access to Ramallah, which is the commercial and business hub for the area, the main provider of various social services – including higher education and medical facilities—, and home to relatives of the villagers. Recently, I visited the area and listened to some of the residents. Zaki, a long time activist from the village of Saffa, accompanied me. When we met, Zaki's first remark, echoing that of many others, was how before the second Intifada it used to take about fifteen minutes to reach Ramallah whereas now it takes an hour or more, depending on the presence of Israeli checkpoints[30]. Likewise, he explained how a main concern for the population has been the rise of travel costs, which are a heavy burden for many families. Khaled Sibli, the owner of several mini-buses in the area, notes indeed how prices almost doubled and even tripled as a result of the increase in fuel prices.[31] The mayor of the village of Beit Tur al-Tahta, Naji Arraf, further explain how the highway ban and the consequent increase in travel time and costs has led students to quit University, workers to move closer to Ramallah, medical patients to give up necessary treatment, and a general decrease in social and family life[32]. Moreover, Naji points out how over the years many Palestinians have died before reaching the

[30] Zaki (this name has been changed) Interview by author. Ramallah. August 25, 2008.
[31] Khaled Sibli. Interview by author. Ramallah. September 1, 2010
[32] Naji Araf. Interview by author. Beit Tur al-Tahta. August 30, 2008

Ramallah hospital as result of the lengthy and difficult alternative road, a situation that did not happen in the past.

This situation has had also an impact on those who do not necessarily need to travel to Ramallah but that are dependent on this road to access schools or agricultural land. The Beit Ur al-Fauqa school, located adjacent to the Beit Horon colony, is a good example. After the closure of Road 443, children from the neighbouring village of At-Tira could not be driven to school and now have to walk long distances to get there. In addition, because they are not allowed to pass over the existing road bridge they are obliged to pass under a rainwater drain conduit under Road 443 to reach school. In rainy seasons this passage becomes full of mud and water (see Figure 4). Another major issue, as the mayor of the village of At-Tira emphasizes, is the lack of access to agricultural land as a result of the security buffer zones imposed in both sides of the road, especially for those households depending on farming.[33] In fact, despite the impact of the closure on the everyday life of the Palestinian population the main problem for these villages remains the continuous land theft resulting from road construction, security buffer zones, and the ongoing expansion of Israeli colonies.

Figure 4: Viaduct for school children under Road 443. (Source: Author)

CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT? ROADS AS SITES OF STRUGGLE

Notwithstanding the severity of the dehumanizing policies that deny the population their most fundamental rights–to movement, health, employment, family life and education—, Palestinians have relentlessly

[33] Taysir. Interview by author. At-Tira. 30 August 30, 2008

sought to contest and at times subvert Israeli efforts at dispossession and segregation. In fact the extensive road ban and mobility restrictions enforced by Israel lead instantly to the development of a wide range of Palestinian coping strategies that sway between everyday survival practices and collective struggles. During the early years of the second Intifada, at the height of the siege, the notion of *sumud* or steadfastness was effectively infused with new meaning. What is regarded by Palestinians as a strategy to stay on the land in the face of colonially inflicted hardships and oppression became, additionally, a struggle to continue with daily life: the courage to confront the road as an unpredictable site of frustrations and humiliations. As Rima Hammami maintains “sumud has become about resisting immobility, the locking down of one’s community, and refusing the impossibility of reaching one’s school or job” (Hammami, 2005: 18). Road 443, as many other roads in the West Bank, became in this way a symbolic terrain of contestation to confront an imposed nearly immobile condition and, to a lesser extend, to challenge land theft.

In the early years of movement restrictions on Road 443, the Palestinian vehicular and walking spatial patterns mirrored this steadfastness attitude. Avoiding blocked access routes and military patrols, residents from the affected villages continued to try to use the highway via dirt roads that cut across rural fields and required surpassing steep hills. These were the days where Palestinians could be seen strolling through valleys and mountains to avoid Israeli checkpoints located in the alternative back road near the village of Deir Ibzi: mothers and fathers with their kids trying to attend a family gathering or bringing their eldest to hospitals, workers with rolled up suit pants hoping to make it in time for their meetings, or teenagers and teachers seeking their way to schools and universities. These are the Palestinian ‘facts on the ground’ that reveal a persistent will to overcome and resist the Israeli policy at disrupting and paralyzing life. As Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar explains, “It is the hope of being able to cross and reach the other side that gives the trip its meaning and intention” (Medina, 2008). These practices however were not always successful, as in many occasions the Israeli army and police would intercept the stream of daring Palestinians. Those caught were regularly subjected to long detention, fines, confiscation of IDs and vehicles, damaging of cars, and often to verbal and physical abuse (B’Tselem, 2004). In fact since the prohibition on Road 443 was not made official, as is the case for other West Bank roads, the implementation of this forbidden road regime is based solely on verbal orders given to the Israeli forces. According to Ezequiel Lein, researcher at B’Tselem at the time, this unwritten policy was coined as *tsriba toda’atit* (print on consciousness) by Israeli army Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon. The idea was indeed to record violent experiences in Palestinian memory. Contesting immobility was turned thus into a

continuous 'cat and mouse contest' where Palestinians would open ex-novo improvised paths to overcome closure while the Israeli forces would attempt to close and monitor those routes in an effort to enforce segregation by all possible means. These individualized coping mechanisms are depicted here not as romanticized resistance strategies, but as a real, conscious, and daily struggle, limited as it is, to confront the coloniser within its own oppressive infrastructural geographies. Palestinian determination to overcome the ban on Road 443 goes however beyond individual practices.

After years subjected to closure, six villages affected by the prohibitions on Road 443 decided to collectively bring the case to the Israeli High Court. They did so approaching the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI). Initially, in 2006, ACRI appealed to the Israeli army demanding the cancellation of all measures prohibiting Palestinian access and movement on the highway. The army, in its response, audaciously denied that it prevented the movement of Palestinians in the road. A year later ACRI submitted a petition to the Israeli High Court denouncing the state of Israel and the army for the breach of military responsibilities towards the occupied Palestinian population, the sweeping violation of fundamental rights, and the unlawful separation and discrimination based on nationality (HCJ, 2011). The petition was a landmark in so far as it accused the state of Israel, for the first time, of the crime of Apartheid. In August 2007, following the request of the High Court, the army commander in the West Bank signed a written order officially banning Palestinian access to Road 443, allegedly, for security considerations. Shortly after, the Israeli army began to deploy co-optation and intimidation tactics against the petitioners to force them to drop the case. As ACRI's field researcher explains, the army initially held talks with some of the petitioners, offering 80 permits (for more than 30,000 residents) to mayors, businessmen, and transportation companies.[34] When Palestinians rejected the offer, the Israeli army began to carry out night incursions into the villages and houses of the petitioners, sent threatening letters, and suspended VIP mobility permits of mayors in the area.[35] Palestinians did not shy away from the harassment, remaining determined to contest the prohibition.

While the legal process was under way, residents in the area initiated popular demonstrations as a means to raise awareness and to pressure Israel to overturn the ban. Zaki, engaged in demonstrations against the wall since 2003, was one of the main organizers of this initiative. In 2007, he and other individuals affected by the closure began enlisting friends, family and activists to hold weekly protests on the sides of Road

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[34] Fairaz Alami (2008) Interview by author. Jerusalem. September 15, 2008.

[35] Ibid.

443. Some of these protests took place with the help and support of villages such as Al-Masarah or Bil'in and organizations like the International Solidarity Movement or Anarchist Against the Wall. Yet, despite the success of some particular actions in momentarily attracting attention to the injustice of the road ban, the weekly protests did not manage to gather a critical mass or to sustain sufficient media attention. Zaki related the difficulties of organizing and maintaining momentum to the fact that many Palestinians in the area were reluctant to participate in the protests for fear of losing their working permits in Israel or in the colonies across the West Bank: mostly those with jobs in Ramallah or other locations in the West Bank would stand at the front lines, even if at the risk of being imprisoned.

Moreover, as Zaki underlined, the "death and prison threats by the Israeli army to anyone daring to get close to the Road 443 during the protests" hampered the capacity to mobilize an already weakened population; especially as the international media, which often functions as a 'shield' for protesters, was frequently absent. The lack of support from the Palestinian Authority did not help either; in fact they only facilitated hospital access to those injured during demonstrations. In March 2008, the High Court inflicted another blow to Palestinian efforts as it implicitly endorsed segregation by approving an army proposal to build a separate road for Palestinians through improved tunnels under Road 443 while sustaining the traffic prohibition. This alterative 'fabric of life'[36] road would, according to the army, minimize the damage caused. A month later there was a collective decision by Palestinian organizers from the affected villages to stop the demonstrations. The strategy became thus to maximize visibility for actions in other areas and wait for the final verdict of the Court. Zaki nevertheless remained convinced that "if the resolution does not suit our interests and access and land are not given back then we will struggle again", as he says, "the third intifada will take place on the roads"[37].

Eventually Palestinian efforts bore fruit insofar as they increasingly lent visibility –locally and internationally— to the racist nature of the road ban, casting a shadow over the High Court´s troubling endorsement of Israel's apartheid policies. The pressure led the Court, in December 2009, to finally issue a ruling on the case, ordering the state to open the road to Palestinian traffic after eight years of closure. The decision was initially perceived by some international media pundits as a victory for the rule of law and human rights and proof of "Israel' liberal and democratic spirit" (Kossoff, 2010). However, as ACRI pointed out "the

[36] 'Fabric of life' is the term given by the Israeli army to describe the construction of an alternative and dedicated road system for Palestinians that effectively separates them from Israeli traffic in particular sections of the network.

[37] Zaki. Interview by author. Ramallah. August 25, 2008.

ruling contained an untenable gap between lofty principles and concrete instructions for the military" (ACRI 2010). In fact, the army was allowed to make do with a ruling that in principle opposed the road ban but that in practice enabled them to pursue its continuation by disingenuous methods. In April 2010 the army announced its plan, which consisted of two new entry points into Road 443 monitored by checkpoints in which Palestinian drivers will be searched and questioned before accessing the road. Yet only a section of 4 km, out of 28, was made available and the roads leading to Ramallah and Jerusalem remained closed for Palestinians (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Road 443 after the ruling of the Israeli High Court of Justice. (Source: ACRI)

After the 'opening', the few Palestinians that accessed the road quickly understood that having access to 4km did not change a thing and that the particularly long waits and dehumanizing experience at these checkpoints was a sign of Israel's army and Government determination to keep this road closed. When the army was criticized for maintaining a de-facto closure, their response was that "their mandate [according to the ruling] was merely to allow local Palestinian traffic on Route 443, not to turn it into a thoroughfare to Ramallah" (Lazaroff, 2010). The months leading to the 'opening' saw a fierce debate in Israel and a surge of fear mongering among Israeli ministries and organizations. The Israeli Ministry of Transport for example exposed its real concerns when it warned that if Road 443 were opened this would collapse the alternative, and less convenient, Israeli motorway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem—Highway one[1]. Today, after what ACRI has described as the 'human rights travesty' of the High Court, Road 443 remains virtually banned for Palestinians. The Israel High Court ruling is an instance of what Ronen Shamir calls 'landmark cases'. The significance of these verdicts, Shamir argues, is primarily symbolic rather than substantive, for they legitimize governmental policies (at least in the eyes of most Israelis) precisely because these decisions become symbols of

democracy in action. For Palestinians, full aware of the limits of going to the High Court, the ruling constituted another step in exposing the hypocrisy that infuses the Israeli legal system and the tyranny and consequences of using liberal humanitarian law in an illiberal settler context.

SEEING THROUGH (ROAD) INFRASTRUCTURE

Assessing the seemingly mundane nature of road networks exposes the significance of this urban infrastructure and the injustice and violence that often accompany its development in colonial contexts. This chapter has presented the road as a tool of analysis but also as an 'archive' of Israel´s settler colonial practice which, when unpacked, makes visible the layered assemblage of colonial discourses, practices, actors and experiences that justify, enable and characterize this infrastructure. A historicized analysis of roads in Palestine shows how these networks are constituted in past and present colonial discourses of modernity, development, legality, and security in an attempt to make natural, legitimate and inevitable the production of Israel´s settler space. The construction of roads however not only entails discourses supporting the rationalities of infrastructure development, but also a physical and violent reworking of Palestinian space that materializes the colonial nature of the state. Thus, as this chapter suggests, road infrastructure is an outcome and a means of the project of colonial settlement and modernization, but also a mirror of the social and political form of the settler state. Another significant aspect that emerges from this chapter is the relevance of the law not only as a tool to normalize and justify the dispossession resulting from road building, but also as an active agent involved in the production of space and the segregation of the indigenous population. Finally, by paying particular attention to the everyday life experiences of the Palestinians I have stressed how roads effectively obscure a larger story of struggle against conquest, dispossession, exploitation and destruction. The building and experiencing of roads enables the formation of colonial subjectivities that are meant to normalize claims over stolen land and produce settlers as modern and mobile subjects. For the indigenous population, in contrast, road infrastructure and draconian access restrictions signify a continuing history of dispossession and a condition of limited mobility. In this sense, the road appears as a contested terrain that rest fundamentally on a dialectical production of socio-spatial relations, for the colonized population are able to deploy individual and collective strategies that expose, challenge and force to readapt, even if in discrete ways, the colonizer's racialized policies and geographies.

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CHAPTER THREE

When settler colonialism becomes 'development': 'fabric of life' roads and the spatialities of development

INTRODUCTION

Three years ago the weekly magazine The Nation published an investigative piece by Nadia Hijab and Jesse Rosenfeld titled "Palestinian roads: Cementing Statehood, or Israeli annexation?" (2010) The text underscored the political nature of major road development projects in the West Bank. More specifically, the authors raised questions about the role that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) play in supporting the construction of a Palestinian road network that accommodates and facilitates Israel's colonial policies. These USAID funded roads, the article argued, are part of an Israeli plan presented to and rejected by the donor community and the PA in 2004. In deed, following diplomatic pressures to relax the tight closure imposed on Palestinians after the second Intifada, the Government of Israel (GOI) sought funding from donors to build 500 km of what they branded as 'fabric of life' roads. That is, the GOI, in attempt to rebuild the indigenous 'fabric of life', proposed a separate Palestinian road network to sustain and consolidate rather than dismantle an entrenched closure regime consisting of physical infrastructure –such as checkpoints, road restrictions, checkpoints and the wall— and draconian mobility regulations –such as the permit system that impinges upon the Palestinian freedom of movement.

This controversy raise to the fore crucial issues that speak to the political geography of infrastructural development and more specifically to the ways 'development' materializes in space consolidating racialized landscapes in the West Bank. Rather than focusing exclusively on Israel's architecture of occupation, the case brings our attention to the often-neglected aspects, intricate development politics and actors involved in the construction of the Palestinian built environment. Indeed when the GOI seeks and obtains support from the USAID and the PA to fund and build the re-ordering of 'native' space what does this say about the role of Palestinian development projects and inter-national actors in the production and consolidation of colonial occupation? How are these projects materially and symbolically constructed and legitimized? In which ways development is transformed into a mechanism to deal with the short-term Palestinian needs arising from the imperatives of settler colonialism? And how do fabric of life roads come to signify the spatial

corollary of a systematic process of expropriation, destruction, closure, and rearticulation of the traditional Palestinian road network and the larger geography of the West Bank? Looking beyond the surface of roads allows us thus to unravel their political rational on the one hand, and the relations that exist between Palestinian and donor agendas, and their concomitant discourses on economic development and state building, with the colonial imperatives built within the Oslo architecture on the other. Ultimately, as we shall see in this paper, the question proposed by Hijab and Rosenfeld is not so much whether Palestinian roads cement statehood *or* Israeli annexation but rather how roads can be seen to fit both purposes. This is so even when the irony remains, as Nigel Parsons remind us, "that formal acceptance of statehood has been attained just as [Israeli] 'facts on the ground' seem destined to empty it of meaning" (2007:529).

To explore the intricacies and complexities of infrastructural development in the West Bank the paper advances a settler colonial perspective that brings geography related scholarship on infrastructure and the production of space together with critical development studies. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, interviews and development reports, I look at the political geography of 'fabric of life' roads against the background of evolving developing strategies following the Oslo accords. Departing from an understanding that infrastructural development is a profoundly material practice as well as a discursive and intellectual project (Apter, 1997), the paper begins laying out a theoretical discussion about what roads can tell us about the spatialities of development. And more specifically about the intricate interrelations that exist between the rolling out of infrastructure and processes of settler colonialism and development. Secondly, the paper recovers the controversy around fabric of life roads and situates it in the larger context of colonial occupation and the infrastructural development policies that define it. This illustrates the generative processes through which geographies of exclusion are created as well as the discursive and structural ways in which indigenous peoples are spatially and racially situated within (and at the same time, separated from) the designs of Zionist settler collectives. Thirdly, the paper looks at the ways fabric of life roads are rationalized as necessary assets to inter-national efforts at economic development and statehood. The paper concludes highlighting how a close look at infrastructure development, understood as a contingent and ongoing symbolic and material process, provides a powerful site to explore spatialities of development and what this tells us about ongoing development efforts in the Palestinian context.

SPATALITIES OF INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER SETTLER COLONIALISM

The importance of infrastructure networks –such as roads, water or electricity—in processes of development in much of the Global South has been persistently celebrated in academic and policy literature. Whereas the proper sequencing of infrastructure and development remains a contested one, “most planners — following Rostow's (1960) teleological stages of economic growth — presume that infrastructures are a necessary and sufficient precondition for economic ‘take-off’ and, therefore, an appropriate indicator of progress” (Grandia, 2013:233). Indeed, infrastructure has long become ubiquitous in discussions of development, “a synonym for prerequisite, a way to label all those things lacking in the underdeveloped world—that is, everything separating the state of underdevelopment from that of modernity” (Rankin, 2009:70). This linear relation between infrastructure development and economic growth becomes more conspicuous in the literature focusing on so called conflict-afflicted scenarios, which are characterized by a legacy of damaged, neglected and uneven access to physical infrastructure. In these contexts, the success of ‘post-conflict’ stabilization and development aid efforts is predicated on rebuilding the indigenous institutional and infrastructural capacity (Barakat, 2005). As such, following the signing of a peace agreement, as politically shaky as this might be, donors often hurry to plan for infrastructure in an attempt to re-activate the productive sector and improving the wellbeing of the population (Del Castillo, 2008). Infrastructures and the powerful sense of development that they promise are thus seen to harbinger broader expectations of liberal peace building and state formation, and an invaluable tool to provide tangible benefits to the population and commensurate visibility for donors (see Collier 2007, Le More 2005).

Such teleological view of development however not only has a limited power in terms of explaining the role of infrastructure in promoting economic growth, let alone conflict stabilization (Jones and Howart, 2012); it also provides little insights into the ways in which infrastructure tends to consolidate patterns of fragmentation and inequality (Graham and Marvin, 2001; McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008). As such, this scholarship tends to emphasize the technical and economic value of infrastructure projects while overlooking its socio-political and spatial meaning. This is not surprising considering that mainstream development literature, like traditional accounts of urban politics, typically regard these networks as the purview of engineers or technocrats, rendering them apolitical and unworthy of attention in their own right (see Coutard, 1999; Graham and Marvin, 2001). Recent multidisciplinary studies –particularly critical geography— have however

began to explore the centrality of infrastructure in development processes by looking at the ways these networks materialize in space often reinforcing existing power relations and “how infrastructures come to matter politically, both discursively and as a set of materials” (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008:364). In doing so this research has shown how in the Global South, and particularly in colonial and nominally post-colonial settings, uneven patterns of infrastructure and access are also the result of specific practices of inter-national development structured by relations of power which are embodied in legacies of colonial infrastructure (McFarlane, 2008; Kooy, 2008). Thus while infrastructure can potentially be instrumental to the broader development and state building enterprise, they can also actively participate in often unexpected ways in the process by which power asymmetries are articulated and enacted.

Bringing these critical insights to bear on traditional development accounts of infrastructure allows recognizing the profoundly political nature of these networks but it also enables a reading of development practice as a process of continuous spatial reorganization whereby infrastructure and territory are coproduced and transformed together. This spatial sensibility to infrastructural development calls attention to landscapes of inequality and racialized difference in ways that abstract aspatial development approaches cannot. For infrastructure networks effectively play a crucial role in the construction of territory as they create connections and disconnections among places and people, thus redefining spatial relations in physical and economic as well as political terms (see Brenner and Elden, 2009; Zanon, 2011). Such a relational approach to infrastructural development, which draws on a rich history of spatial theory in geography, becomes even more salient in settler colonial contexts–such as South Africa, United States, Canada or Israel. In these environments, whereas the expropriation of land and the parallel elimination of natives are the hallmarks of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006), the initial ability to dispossess, and eventually consolidate itself, rests primarily on physical power and the supporting infrastructure of the settler state (Harris, 2004). As such, infrastructures are a crucial material and symbolic means through which the settler community is territorialized while simultaneously indigenous outsiders are deterritorialized. Typically, as settler colonial infrastructures spread, these networks are normalized in their association with tropes of modernity, progress and development. Conjuring a spatial and political sensibility to the ways in which infrastructure territorializes in settler colonial settings allows us thus to explore the spatialities of development –a term emphasizing the production of space as a material and discursive practice.[38]

[38] For a useful geographical account about spatialities of development in the case of Zimbabwe see Donald Moore’s Suffering for Territory (2005)

This attention to grounded development geographies significantly enhances our understanding of how donor aid and national development practices tend to consolidate and reproduce the racialized, fragmented and uneven character of colonial infrastructure in the Palestinian context. Here, and more specifically in the occupied West Bank[39], the prevalent post-conflict paradigm adopted by development planners during the past two decades –since the signature of Oslo's interim 'peace' agreements— assumes occupation to be a temporary event rather than a structural condition. This view not only tends to accommodate the existing realities on the ground; it also confuses conflict for settler colonialism. As John Collins puts it, using the term conflict in Palestine without qualification obscures the nature of Israel's ongoing settler colonial project as well as the violent social, political, economic and spatial structures that define and enable it, including infrastructure networks (2010). In effect, the Israeli settler state has transformed infrastructures into assets that create dual-spatial configurations through networks that entirely run along ethnic lines. These networks have been effectively redesigned from its original and purely utilitarian purpose into political and symbolic tools of Israel's ethnonational project (see Azaryahu, 2001; Weizman, 2004; Jabary Salamanca, 2013). As such infrastructures are used to rearticulate space in ways that serve as a source of connection, but also as a means of disconnection, discrimination and control (see Halper, 2000; Weizman, 2007; Jabary Salamanca, 2010). At the same time, Israel's policies of infrastructure disruption through bureaucracies of occupation, as well as destruction by military means, has been described as a way of "de-development" (Roy 1987, 2004) or "forced de-modernization" (Graham, 2002a, 2002b) of the Palestinian society. In spite of this, development planners rather than challenging the racialized character of infrastructure have tended to invest in Palestinian networks that ultimately accommodate colonial occupation either by consolidating uneven access and dependency on Israel –as in the case of electricity and water— or by endorsing segregation–such as roads.

Roads are a case in point for these infrastructures are a defining feature of the colonial and apartheid policies of the state of Israel (Jabary Salamanca, 2013). From the standpoint of the Palestinian population, Israeli roadways effectively represent bypasses between places and thus an impossibility of mobility but they are also one of the most enduring aspects of colonialism as these networks leave behind violent traces of forced removal, dispossession and segregation of the indigenous urban and rural classes. Yet, whereas literature focusing on Palestine

[39] Whereas the focus of this paper is the occupied West Bank, the racialized nature of Israeli infrastructures networks can be seen in many other instances such as the Gaza Strip or the Unrecognized Villages in the Naqab dessert.

recognizes the crucial role that Israeli roads and its accompanying policies of closure and fragmentation play in constraining development efforts, these accounts rarely pay attention to the ways Palestinian 'national' infrastructures projects also contribute to undermining these very efforts. For if Israeli roads in the West Bank enable settler colonization and indigenous dispossession, then the current development of a separate road network, has become its necessary corollary. In the following, I take fabric of life roads as a starting point to explore what these 'development' projects may suggest about the spatialities of infrastructural development two decades after Oslo and in a context of prolonged settler colonialism. While development rhetoric has it that these roads are tools to improve movement, promote economic growth and state building, I will suggest that the materiality of these infrastructures, and the discourses that enabled and justify them, are invested with productive socio-political, economic and spatial relations that consolidate colonial relations. Rather than neutral means to more substantive ends, I suggest that these donor-funded Palestinian roads are inscribed with power geometries that are central to the continuous reformulation of settler colonial space. By making visible the layered assemblage of discourses, materials, practices, and actors that constitute roads we can thus begin to understand how the fabric of life roads are an outcome and a means of settler colonialism, as well as a mirror of the technocratic and depoliticizing effects of forms of Palestinian development that antepose rituals of state building and economic performance to challenging the settler colonial present.

REENGINEERING THE NATIVE'S FABRIC OF LIFE

The Palestinian uprising that erupted in September 2000 in response to Israel's relentless colonial policies, the Al-Aqsa Intifada, triggered a brutal Israeli repression campaign that caused the death and imprisonment of thousands of people, the military occupation of cities, towns and villages across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the destruction of large swaths of Palestinian homes and donor-funded infrastructure. Less spectacular but equally devastating was Israel's enforcement of a comprehensive closure regime that resulted in an irreversible transformation of the Palestinian geography, the dismemberment of the economy, and the disruption of all social life. Closure progressively materialized in a mixture of physical infrastructure –such as checkpoints, roadblocks, separate road networks or the wall— and draconian mobility restrictions –via a military-bureaucratic pass system—which deprived Palestinians of their right to freedom of movement. Whereas 'hard' infrastructures enabled Israel to colonize Palestinian land through a process of spatial disintegration and fragmentation, the pass system transformed a universal right into a privilege granted to few on a case-by-case basis (Hass, 2004). Needless

to say, if during the intifada closure became extraordinary in terms of scope, duration, and severity, this policy was far from new. As Amira Hass has consistently argued, blanket prohibitions on Palestinian mobility began in January 1991, developing throughout the Oslo years from a temporary measure into a permanent and perfected policy in the face of PA and international indifference (2004). This intimate relation between the control of territory and the control of movement of goods and persons, have come to fundamentally define and enable the colonization of Palestine (Brown, 2004).

With the onset of the intifada, restrictions and prohibitions of Palestinian travel along main and secondary West Bank roads became a crucial component of closure. Israel justified this unwritten policy on security grounds under the premise that all Palestinians are a security risk. Yet the logic of this “forbidden roads regime” (B’Tselem, 2004), as it became clear over the years, was driven by an impetus of separation based on ethnic lines that attempted to separate settler and indigenous mobility and living spaces (see Weizman, 2007; Parizot, 2009). As such, while settlers could travel freely across the West Bank on dedicated highways (built on expropriated indigenous lands) and main roads of the Palestinian network, most Palestinians were forced to use long, winding and in some cases unpaved alternate routes. Furthermore, the forbidden roads regime and other mobility restrictions denied most Palestinians critical access to their farmland and water resources, education and health facilities, and to the rest of their fabric of life. In 2004 alone, Palestinians were banned from using 732 kilometres on 41 West Bank roads because they were either completely or partially closed to them, required a special permit or were somewhat restricted (B’Tselem, 2004). About 674 obstacles, including checkpoints, roadblocks, road gates, etc., regulated the movement of people and goods from one locality to another (WB, 2004a). Furthermore, the construction of the segregation wall, which began being built in 2002, consolidated and in some locations exacerbated the impact of closure. In practice, this meant a significant increase in travel costs and a fundamental change in the travel habits of Palestinians that could no longer plan their trips with normality, nor access many urban and rural areas which became completely out of reach. In this way Israel imposed upon Palestinians an im-mobility condition that literally brought “life to a halt” during the high days of the intifada.

The destructive nature of the closure regime was responsible of unleashing an Israeli-made humanitarian crisis of major proportions. According to the World Bank, closure was the main factor causing the Palestinian people to suffer “one of the worst recessions in modern history” which drove nearly half of the population to live below the poverty line (WB, 2004b:1). Indeed, if freedom of movement is a

resource as important as land or water in that it enables the means of production of a community (Hass, 2004), then its denial and strict regulation became an intrinsic feature of the process of Palestinian suppression and de-development (Roy, 2004). That is, by preventing Palestinian mobility and access to critical inputs needed to promote internal growth, closure and the denial of freedom of movement largely contributed to the collapse of the Palestinian economy and to limiting its development beyond a certain threshold (Roy, 1987). This unbearable situation prompted considerable pressure from diplomats, donors and human rights groups that condemned and requested the GOI to remove mobility restrictions and restore 'normality'. These voices, which were joined by the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the illegality of the wall and its associate closure regime (ICJ, 2004), casted a long shadow over the Israeli state.

'Everything flows' in the 'fabric of life'

In January 2004, nearly four years into the Palestinian intifada and mainly in response to increasing international pressures, the Israeli Ministry of Defense set up a taskforce to deal with the subject of the Palestinian 'fabric of life' (*Mirkam Haim* in Hebrew). Headed by retired army general Baruch Spiegel, the committee was introduced as a humanitarian initiative that could assure Israel' security needs in ways that enabled "as much as possible, a dignified and humane Palestinian fabric of life" (Haaretz, 2004). In essence, the program sought to weave a new infrastructural fabric for the Palestinian population: one that could accommodate Israel's policies of territorial fragmentation, separation, and closure, with an attempt to improving the appalling socio-economic conditions these very policies had created over the previous decades. More specifically, the motivation of the fabric of life initiative was twofold. On the one hand, to micro-manage and avoid the deepening of a humanitarian crisis that would have required the GOI to intervene by providing food and essential services to the Palestinian population (Weizman, 2004). And, on the other, to reconnect Palestinian infrastructures –such as roads, electricity or water networks—that were being disrupted and severed by the construction of the segregation wall and other colonial infrastructure. Indeed, if, as argued by the GOI, lessening the socio-economic impacts created by its colonial policies was the rational driving the fabric of life, creating piecemeal and punctual infrastructural and logistical 'solutions' became its core and daily operational business.

Whereas the fabric of life program initially sought to deal with the Israeli army's dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians at checkpoints and wall gates mushrooming across the territories, it gradually shifted attention to the impossible mobility geographies resulting from the forbidden

roads regime. Thus, in addition to ‘civilizing’ checkpoints, designing an alternative Palestinian road network to facilitate the transportation of goods and persons became one of the program’s core priorities. To this effect, the Israeli army drew up a comprehensive road plan intended solely for Palestinian use that aimed to prevent restrictions from paralyzing movement in certain areas while consolidating separation. The plan, given the name ‘Everything flows’, advocated full separation by assigning the main roads of the West Bank for the use of settlers leaving Palestinians with a network of secondary roads passing through villages and city centres. Following criticism[40], the project was dropped and replaced by the ‘Roads and Tunnel Plan’. In this revised version, separation was accomplished by means of bridges and interchanges with the Israelis traveling on the top at high speed, and Palestinians at the lower levels, on roads referred to as ‘fabric of life’ roads (see Figure 6). The plan, which consisted of more than 24 tunnels and 56 roads, allows Palestinian vehicles to travel on only twenty percent of the roads on which Israeli vehicles travel. By providing settlers and Palestinians with two separate networks in the West Bank, segregation became the rational of this new infrastructural arrangement. As argued by the Defense establishment, the plan was “a result of government policy to speed up the practical separation from the Palestinians” (BBC, 2006). Even though this plan was not officially approved, many of its components were implemented, and fabric of life roads are being built ever since.

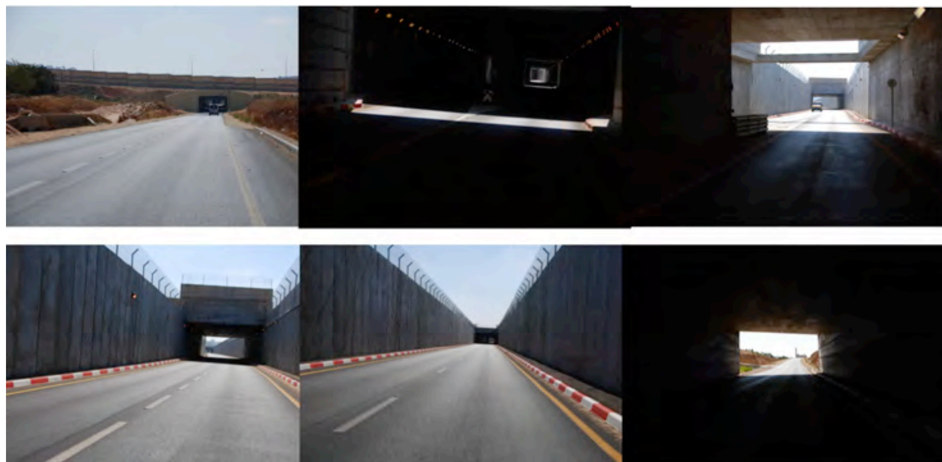

Figure 6: Bridges and interchanges shaping the fabric of life roads. (Source: Author)

The fabric of life roads were intimately imbricated with Ariel Sharon’s “disengagement plan”, which under the pretext of withdrawing settlers from the Gaza strip, to legally rid itself of occupier status, consolidated

[40] The council of Jewish Communities in Judea and Samaria (YESHA Council) complained that the plan would make impossible to build additional roads to serve Israelis since it will be argued that the roads only serve "occupiers" and are thus illegal (see http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=28151)

Israel's colonial grip over the West Bank. As noted in the plan, Israel was to assist in improving the transportation infrastructure in order to facilitate the contiguity of Palestinian transportation in the West Bank.[41] In this way, "transportation contiguity" became a means to replace territorial contiguity by artificially reconnecting Palestinian population centres affected by closure through fabric of life roads and tunnels. Fabric of life roads, "by diverting Palestinian traffic away from areas reserved for exclusive settlement control', contributed to institutionalize the closure regime while lending legitimacy to the frenetic expansion of colonies (settlements), the wall, and the relentless Israeli encroachment over Palestinians lands (NAD, 2005). Ultimately, however, these roads were meant to resolve a greater strategic problem inherent in the territorial framework formalized by the Oslo agreements. That is, "how to enable Palestinians to travel between the territorial islands defined by Oslo –Areas A and B, comprising about 40 percent of the West Bank— on roads not used by settlers" (FMEP, 2004). As such, fabric of life roads became the infrastructural corollary to the architecture of occupation. For if Oslo was about legitimizing the colonization of Palestinian's remaining lands to consolidate a settler society, that is the territorialization of a new social and spatial order. Then, transforming the indigenous fabric of life was an attempt to reterritorialize the Palestinian population within the confines of newly imposed boundaries and to articulate its increasingly isolated reserves. In other words, in order to protect and enable the expansion of the settler's material fabric of life, the indigenous fabric of life had to be severed and reassembled.

Mobilizing humanitarianism

By defining what the Palestinian fabric of life ought to be, the GOI was able to reappropriate, reshape, and eventually reconstruct it according to the imperatives of settler colonialism. Yet this appropriation had as well a discursive function in so far as the fabric of life became a 'humanitarian' signifier to conjure Israel's own security needs with Palestinians livelihood issues: an object that can be disrupted and damaged to protect the settlement enterprise, but also developed and managed in ways that mitigate violence in a 'humanitarian' fashion. For the GOI this security-humanitarian equation follows the logic of the 'lesser evil', that is the acceptability of pursuing an undesired course of action in order to prevent a greater injustice. Eyal Weizman argues that this balancing act derives from the legal principle of 'proportionality', which is the clearest manifestation of the lesser evil in International Humanitarian Law (2012). Drawing on the case of the West Bank wall, Weizman shows how 'proportionality' becomes embedded in concrete

[41] See the guidelines for the Disengagement Plan here: http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/DisengageSharon_eng.htm

spatial and architectural forms through a humanitarian and legal register and in turn, the ways this transformed the wall from a major geopolitical issue into a humanitarian one that ultimately legitimizes it. Fabric of life roads, like the ‘humanitarian wall’, were an attempt to conceal and civilize the violence and spatialities of settler colonialism by displaying Israel’s benevolent attitude towards the Palestinians. Indeed, the fabric of life program “turned 'humanitarianism' into a strategic category in Israeli military operations” (Weizman, 2004:149).

The 'humanitarian' rhetoric that defines the current stage of colonial occupation, which intensified in parallel to the large-scale humanitarian intervention that ensued the intifada, becomes an attempt to normalize it (Weizman, 2004). According to Weizman, the ‘humanitarian officer’ in charge of the fabric of life program, Baruch Spiegel “best embodies Israel’s attempts to govern the occupied territories by ‘managing’ the humanitarian situation as an instrument of state policy” (2012:83). Humanitarianism is thus no longer something that limits or constrains violence but rather, as Kotef argues, “it accompanies violence and makes it possible” (2010:181). The humanitarian veneer that infused the fabric of life program is in many ways what eventually enabled the GOI to engage with and accommodate the criticism of humanitarian and development actors that were pressing for immediate solutions to the socio-economic impacts of closure. As Weizman sustains, “the massive presence of humanitarians in the field of military operations means that the military no longer considers them as bystanders in military operations, but factors them into the militarized environment, just like the occupied population, the houses, the streets and the infrastructure” (2004:152). In this way, the Israeli army, in their efforts to reroute the flows of goods and persons through an alternative road network for Palestinians, ended up cooperating with donors, financial institutions and human rights organizations that in principle opposed its policies. Thus, the fabric of life program and its accompanying infrastructural and logistical solutions not only created a new geographical and infrastructural reality; it was also an attempt to redefine relations between settlers and humanitarian and development actors.

Settler colonialism solicits development

The roads and tunnel plan was thus a major Israeli planning, budgetary and humanitarian marketing effort that to a large extent managed to contain a barrage of international criticism. After more than a decade of closure policies and four decades of infrastructural neglect and de-development, the plan constituted the first time architects of occupation designed and implemented a comprehensive road network for Palestinians in the West Bank. Yet the GOI was unwilling to deal alone with the financial burden of a project that included 500 km of

roads, mostly rehabilitating existing secondary roads, at a cost of 200 million dollars. In September 2004, taking advantage of the humanitarian crisis it created, the GoI approached the donor community via the World Bank (WB) to help finance the plan. The timing is not negligible as this crucial infrastructural development happened within the framework of the disengagement plan from Gaza, and in a context of intense negotiations between the international community and Israel to revive the Palestinian economy (Le More, 2008). In fact, the proposal was reportedly a response by the GoI to the a World Bank report, Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and Settlements, which underlined that Palestinian economic recovery depended on a drastic shift in the internal closure policy. As Anne Le More notes, “donors could not but delight in the Israeli intention to facilitate movement and contiguity within the oPt, something it had repeatedly said was a prerequisite for Palestinian economic recovery” (2005:132). Israel was thus effectively asking the donor community to finance colonialism according its blueprint for replacing territorial contiguity with ‘transportation contiguity’ in the West Bank, thereby rendering hollow any possibility of Palestinian sovereignty.

Before the plan was officially presented to the donor community, the WB requested the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to prepare a cartographic analysis for exploring its potential implications (see Figure 7). By overlapping the proposed roads and tunnels to the existing transportation network, colonial settlements and the wall, the study revealed the profound political nature of the plan (OCHA, 2004). Moreover, it showed that Israel had already requested the USAID to fund fabric of life roads (136.4 Km), some of which were already under construction (54.2 Km) with the approval of the PA. OCHA presented the results at a convoluted donor meeting where the Swiss representative, bearer of IHL, stood up during the presentation and angrily complained that this proposal was not only unacceptable but also a violation of international norms[42]. The PA and all donors, including the USAID, ultimately refused to participate and invest in a plan that entailed a *de facto* recognition and support of colonial occupation. As former Palestinian Planning Minister Ghassan al Khatib put it, the plan “perpetuates the settlements and consolidate an apartheid regime” (Hass, 2004). One of the direct outcomes of this meeting was the establishment, via Cabinet resolution, of a special Palestinian Committee – comprising representatives from various ministries, PECDAR and the Negotiations Support Unit (NSU)—to evaluate future road rehabilitation projects within the West Bank on a case-by-case basis.[43] As Amira Hass noted, this Cabinet resolution was rather exceptional for it refused the logic of fabric of life roads,

[42] Interview with former UN-OCHA employee. Jerusalem, August 2012.
[43] The Committee was based on a Cabinet Resolution passed on 4th October 2004

disrupting a long time history of PA's denial and inaction particularly against Israeli closure and fragmentation policies (2004).

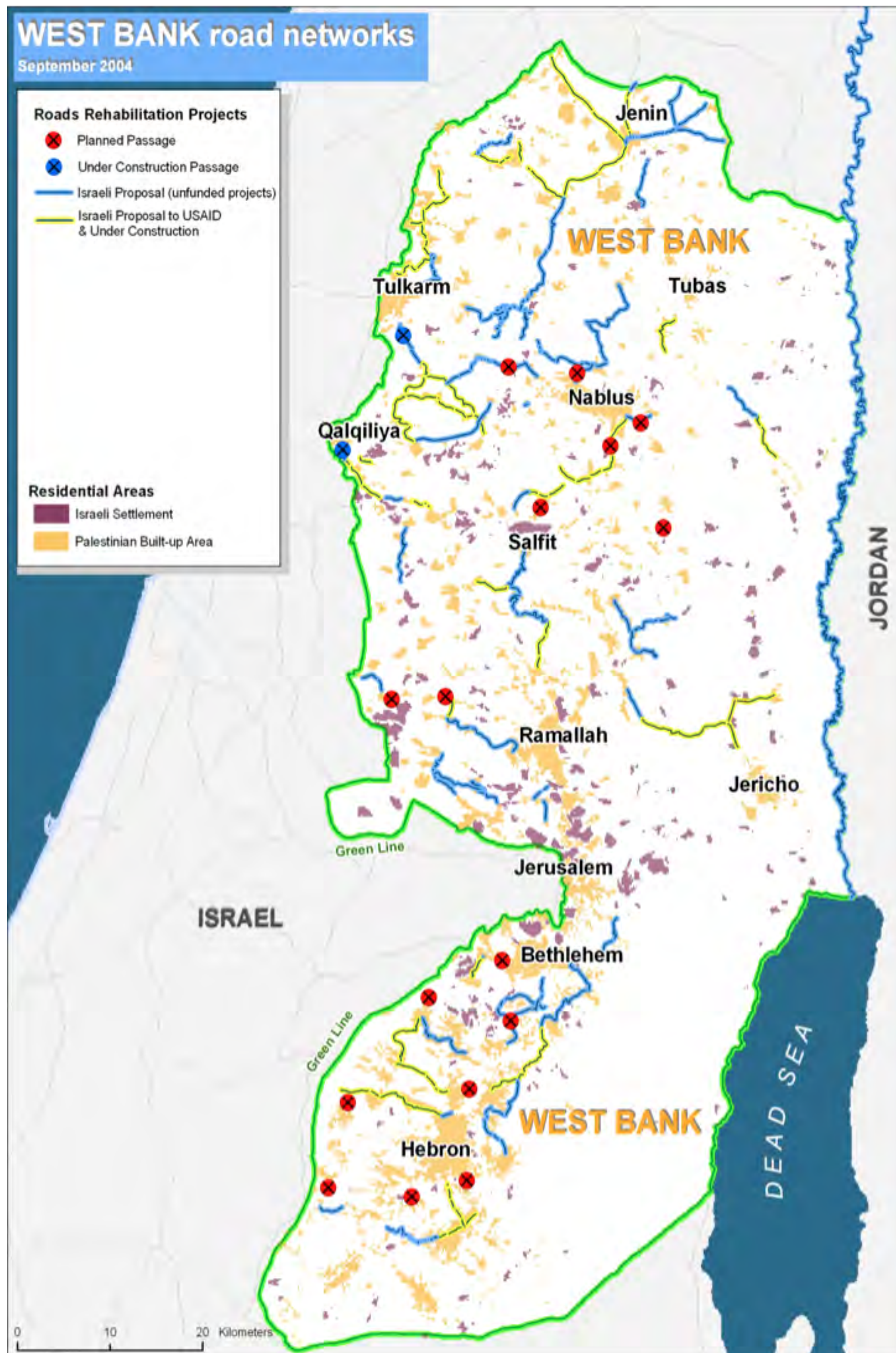

Figure 7: Proposed Israeli Roads Rehabilitation Program and USAID funded roads under-construction, 2004 (Source: UN-OCHA)

The reluctance of donors was largely driven by the legal implications of the ICJ advisory opinion on the illegality of the wall and it's associated regime –including roads, checkpoints and settlements. The ruling set

new ‘rules of engagement’ for donors as it warned about efforts to recognize the illegal situation created by the wall or rendering aid towards maintaining the situation created by its construction. With regards to road infrastructure, a document prepared by the PA in collaboration with the NSU and presented to donors, determined that “the construction or rehabilitation of roads, tunnels, underpasses, or other passageways that accommodate the restriction created by the Barrier and its associated regime […] are in contradiction to the ICJ Opinion” (Hampsen and Abou, 2005:14). This was the case of fabric of life roads that as the IDF recognized were “an integral part of the security fence [wall] project … intended, mainly, to replace other roads, to which the access has been disconnected by the fence’s route” (B’Tselem, 2004:117). Ultimately, this meant that donors could be held legally accountable for supporting projects that, like roads, legitimize occupation. In spite of this, donors’ positions were far from consistent. The same report shows that whereas some donors strongly supported wall mitigation projects on humanitarian grounds, others expressed serious concerns on political grounds, and yet some others, like the USAID, refused to comment due to political concerns.

Constructing the fabric of life

In 2010, six years after the refusal in block to the road and tunnels plan, an investigative report by Nadia Hijab and Jesse Rosenfeld exposed that fabric of life roads were being funded and built by the USAID with the consent of the PA. Based on updated data from ARIJ, the report showed that 32 percent of the PA roads funded and implemented by USAID (between 1999-2010) overlapped with the plan presented to donors in 2004. That is the PA and USAID effectively executed 22 percent of Israel's plan (about 114 km). In other words, more than 60 Km of fabric of life roads were built since the establishment of the Palestinian committee that had to monitor sensitive infrastructural projects[44]. A month after the report was published, Nazareth-based journalist Jonathan Cook released a more assertive and critical piece titled “US funds 'apartheid' road network in Israel” (2010). Cook essentially rehearsed the above arguments putting however more emphasis on USAID’s influence over Palestinian decision making concerning road planning. More specifically, the text underscored the ways in which the PA was being “bullied into conceding the road infrastructure wanted by Israel”. Suheil Khalilieh, the head of the settlement monitoring at ARIJ, was quoted as saying that “USAID presents a package deal of

[44] In addition to the fabric of life roads proposed and built by Israel, the map reflects projects funded by the Palestinian MOPW and the USAID. Some of the later include relevant and problematic road sections such as the Wadi il Naar and Muarajjat roads, as well as thoroughfares in areas affected by closure such as Bethlehem or the South-Easter Ramallah area.

donations for infrastructure projects in the West Bank and the Palestinians are faced with a choice of take it or leave it. That way the PA is cornered into accepting roads it does not want." While USAID did not comment, the PA took full responsibility for this embarrassing episode. Indeed, in an unusual and remarkably swift move, Ghassan Khatib, at the time spokesperson for the Palestinian Government Media Centre, responded to the criticism with a public statement. The *communiqué* refused all accusations arguing that there are no new roads being built in the West Bank but instead 'resurfaced' or upgraded roads; the PA and not the USAID makes the ultimate decisions regarding roads; and that all planned roads are part of a Palestinian plan which in certain areas intersects with the Israeli map (Khatib, 2010).

Despite the indisputable proof that fabric of life roads were actually built, the PA statement focused on subtleties that did little to counter the reported facts. First, the idea that roads are not new but rather upgraded secondary tracks is precisely the basis to the Israel proposed network, as we have seen above. An employee of the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing put it this way, "resurfacing and upgrading are just euphemisms for endorsing road projects which keep Palestinians away from ever expanding settlement areas"[45]. The problem indeed is not the rehabilitation of roads but rather that these projects eventually entail the permanent closure of crucial sections from the Palestinian network. Second, the argument that the PA decides which roads to develop following evaluation from the inter-ministerial committee set up in 2004 is also inaccurate. In fact, after Hamas won elections in 2006, all committees had to be re-constituted, including the one supervising roads. This means that the committee lay dormant for years only reconvening in 2009[46]. Moreover the PA has yet to develop a comprehensive strategy for roads as to this day it lacks a transportation master plan (MoPAD, 2010) Finally, considering that the USAID is in charged to develop the capacities of the PA in terms of road infrastructure in addition to the fact that it exclusively negotiates all road projects with Israel from the outset and the agency's record in the region,[47] the claim that USAID does not meddle with Palestinian planning, road or otherwise, lacks credibility. Nonetheless, echoing the

[45] Interview with MoPW Engeneer. Ramallah. August, 2012.
[46] Interview with Ministry of Planning oficial. Ramallah, August, 2010.
[47] This was not the first time the agency was accused of collaborating in developing Israeli settlement infrastructure throughout the occupied territories. Years before the advent of the so called Oslo peace process Meron Benvenisti, former Major of Jerusalem and leading director of the West Bank Data Base Project, released a report documenting the ways in which Israel limited and diverted US Aid development funding into projects that suited the Israeli colonial enterprise, concretely public works and infrastructures such as roads, water or sewage (Benvenisti, 1986). Moreover, as Roy argues, "the Israeli authorities had long used foreign aid—U.S. aid in particular—to further their political and economic objectives in the West Bank and Gaza in a manner that precluded needed economic reform and insured continued Palestinian dependence" (Roy, 2010).

position of Suhail Khalilieh, various engineers at the MoPW maintain that in fact “occasionally the USAID does propose road projects which fit Israeli designs”.[48] Interestingly, while the USAID had the same position as the PA with regards to the criticism, it was sceptical about the very existence of an Israeli plan. In words of a high-ranking USAID official, “People are concerned about an Israeli [road] plan that does not exist […] Left-folks believe that there is a conspiracy to separate Israeli and Palestinian roads but this is a bunch of bull!”[49] This is surprising considering that, as we have seen, Israel’s plan was well known to the international community. Not least to the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, which years earlier was reportedly briefed by Deputy Defence Minister Efraim Sneh about Israel’s intentions to, literally, build a network of “apartheid roads” (Wikileaks, 2006).

To be clear, it is difficult to contest the significance that alternative roads have for the everyday life of Palestinians, for this infrastructure provides a much needed means of transportation to overcome the obstacles, fragmentation and isolation policies enforced by Israeli colonial occupation. However, as we have seen, the ways in which these roads are being paved reveal a flawed logic: one which ultimately deals with the immediate Palestinian needs arising from escalating Israeli colonial policies rather than addressing its political root causes. Through its assistance in developing fabric of life roads, the USAID and the PA thus not only relive Israel –as Occupying power—from its obligations under IHL to delivering assistance and services to the Palestinian population; they also, however well intentioned, become complicit in enabling settler colonialism.

DISRUPTING RITUALS OF DEVELOPMENT: ROADS TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND STATE BUILDING

If as we have seen the act of planning, financing and building fabric of life roads is a practice of spatial ordering that reproduces socio-economic and spatial injustices, then no less problematic is how this infrastructure is being rationalized. In what follows we turn our attention to the ways in which fabric of life roads are normalized through and incorporated into the rituals of economic development and state building that followed the intifada; a process that transformed this colonial infrastructure into a neutral description of various prerequisites to economic growth and statehood. In effect, the semantic shift brought about through the politics of international aid from fabric of life roads to

[48] This is the case of projects like the Wadi-Sair road connecting Hebron to Bethlehem or the Muarrajat road, that creates an alternative to Road 1. These roads, engineers from the MoPWH insisted, are part of the alternative North-South and East-West transportation axis that is being developed and that fit Israel´s strategic infrastructure occupation. Interview MoPW. Ramallah, August, 2012.

[49] Interview with USAID oficial. Tel Aviv. August, 2012

the notion of infrastructure (broadly understood), subordinated the construction of an alternative and separate Palestinian network to economic analysis and ideas of the state. In this way infrastructure became a way of talking about the necessities of development without recourse to politics. This not only underlines the technocratic and apolitical veneer associated with such strategies but also the profound flaws that inform development actors’ “unsophisticated but common assumption about the linear progress between peace, security and development” (Le More, 2005:7).

Normalizing closure

In the aftermath of the intifada, donor’s answer to the escalation of Israeli colonial and closure policies was the allocation of vast amounts of funding as Band-Aid solution to the deteriorating situation. Rather than confronting closure and other Israeli policies from the outset, the aid community responded “by shifting to emergency assistance while attempting to maintain a veneer of medium-term development focus and continuing rhetorically to frame its assistance programme within a broader state-building objective” (Le More, 2005:14). In doing so, donors not only continued to ignore or deliberately downplayed the Palestinian territorial, demographic, socio-economic and political fragmentation, they also provided a safety net for Israeli violations that reduced the sense of urgency for finding a political solution challenging he ‘new’ *status quo*. The paradox, as Le More aptly notes, is how despite Israel’s ‘facts on the ground’ becoming more compelling in its disavowal of Palestinian statehood, the international community stubbornly held to the idea of sustaining a futile ‘peace process’ through an unprecedented amount of aid (2005). This contradiction is even more striking when looking at donor’s long stance with regards to closure and mobility restrictions. From the World Bank’s publication of the 1993 study *Investment in Peace,* which became the blueprint for donor intervention underpinning the Oslo accords, to the Paris Economic Protocol and major socio-economic projects of the Oslo era, all have been rhetorically consistent about the need to develop appropriate transport infrastructure and removing mobility restrictions for persons and goods as a prerequisite for successful Palestinian economic development and viable statehood. Yet, despite this clear diagnosis and the consolidation throughout the years of the closure regime, donors have systematically failed to take these realities into account and most crucially, have gradually ended up incorporating these colonial precepts into development policy making.

The apartheid roads controversy effectively underscored the entrenchment of a trend among certain donors to endorse and adapt to closure, territorial fragmentation and separation. Unable or unwilling to

politically challenge these policies, and in the virtual absence of criticism from Palestinian officialdom, some donors such as the USAID and the WB have increasingly adopted Israel's Bantustanization logic as a means to revive and lend credibility to a decade of 'peace negotiations'. The frustration with Israeli policies and the believe that colonial occupation has become irreversible, as Sara Roy contends, effectively led to the "formalization, institutionalization and acceptance by Israel and key members of the international donor community of Palestinian territorial and demographic fragmentation, cantonization, and isolation." (2010:4). The consolidation of this shift towards the normalization of closure and its accompanying infrastructure (i.e. fabric of life roads and checkpoints) can be situated in the unilateral Israeli disengagement plan and more specifically, in the US brokered Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA, 2005); a treaty solely designed to deal with the question of closure and mobility restrictions with the aim of promoting economic development and improving the humanitarian situation. These initiatives, it is worth noting, came on the heels of the Quartet's "Roadmap for Peace" that formally endorsed Israel´s intention to retain major colonial settlements and infrastructure on the West Bank as part of any future peace deal –these were the venues that most donors embraced to promote Palestinian economic recovery, institutional reform and state building in years to come.

Rendering closure infrastructure into a technocratic and nonpolitical question

The AMA is crucial for it rendered closure, mobility restrictions and its related infrastructure into a technical and nonpolitical question (see Ferguson, 1990; Li, 2007). In effect, the agreement delineated two simultaneous processes that underwrote the normalization of closure among development actors while subsuming fabric of life roads and checkpoints as inexorable features of the occupation's unfolding logistical economy. On the one hand, the agreement placed Israel's 'security' conditions before Palestinian freedom of movement, let alone other fundamental rights. The AMA provided that, "consistent with security needs Israel will facilitate the movement of people and goods within the West Bank and minimize disruption to Palestinian lives" (2005). Incidentally, and as noted above, this balancing act is the very premise informing the fabric of life program. In this way, not only Palestinian movement remained subjected to Israeli colonial policies, it also made both compatible. As argued by the WB in follow up reports about the agreement's implementation, "the twin goals of enhanced Israeli security and improved Palestinian movement are compatible in the near-term" (2006:1). The AMA, on the other hand, sought to reconcile Palestinian economic development with closure by improving rather than dismantling the regime itself. As the Bank stated "Economic

activity cannot recover if people and goods are unable to move with a tolerable degree of efficiency” (Idem). Efficiency, the bank contented, would be achieved through “the introduction of modern management techniques and new scanning technologies [that] will permit the creation of a regime that provides high levels of security for Israel as well as commercial efficiency.” (Idem:4) In effect, the refining of the closure regime to stabilize the Palestinian economy –through upgrading checkpoints, modernizing back-to-back procedures, and rehabilitating roads and related transport infrastructure— created an inexorable link between the two and *de facto* normalized the bureaucracies and infrastructure of closure. This technocratic exercise, which was meant to gradually remove mobility restrictions, ended up emptying closure of political meaning and turning this fundamental issue into a purely economic affair. Ultimately, as Sayigh argues, the AMA was “the most developed and detailed attempt to maintain the essence of the long-standing international approach while working within the framework of overall Israeli security and territorial and administrative control” (2007:10).

USAID’s mobility improvement projects in the West Bank are a case in point for they conform squarely to AMA’s double logic –of normalizing and reconciling closure with prospects of Palestinian economic recovery and state building. In the instance of fabric of life roads it is interesting to see how the controversial and political nature of this undertaking became gradually diluted as it was discursively and programmatically incorporated into the agency’s flagship scheme, the Infrastructure Needs Project (INP). Launched in 2008 with a pledged budget of more than $1 billion, the INP is a comprehensive infrastructural plan –including roads, water and sanitation—that seeks to “support a moderate Palestinian government through the rehabilitation of existing, and the building of, new infrastructure required for a viable Palestinian State.” (USAID, 2010b:1). As fabric of life roads were subsumed under INP’s transportation projects, this infrastructure was scripted with new attributes that significantly differed from and concealed its original purpose. In this way fabric of life roads can be seen in light of the enlightened goals set by the agency for road infrastructure more generally. That is, facilitating the movement and access of people and goods, supporting the development of a sustainable economy, forming a contiguous road network and improving the quality of life for Palestinians in the West Bank (USAID, 2013). These roads however are not the only way in which USAID contributes to the material and symbolic rationalization of closure.

The agency –following World Bank recommendations and in close coordination with Spiegel’s fabric of life program—also invests vast financial and technical resources into upgrading Israeli military

checkpoints and related infrastructure *within* and on the borders of the West Bank.[50] These efforts, which are intimately related to fabric of life roads, are presented as Palestinian 'trade related' projects to facilitate the flow of goods and people according to AMA principles. The Palestinian Integrated Trade Arrangements (PITA) is revealing in this respect. PITA was introduced as an Aid package to Palestinians with the aim to "accelerate the speed, efficiency, and security of Palestinian commercial flows into and out of the West Bank and Gaza" (USAID, 2005). In practice the project, which was allegedly imposed on the PA,[51] delivered technical assistance and border crossing technology to the GOI worth $50 million–mainly container scanners—with the aim of supervising and reducing inspection times of Palestinian commercial cargo at major crossings in the territories. Not only this consolidated the existence of military checkpoints, it also added an extra layer of security that increased the already cumbersome, expensive and dehumanizing procedures at the crossings (Thagdisi-Rad, 2010). By adopting this particular trade approach, closure infrastructure is repositioned in the realm of trade economics in ways that give Israel's security concerns priority over Palestinian economic recovery (idem). These attempts at reform notwithstanding are effectively redundant when goods and people are unable to enter or exit the territories in the first place due to random and capricious internal and external closure. Projects like PITA are thus a way of lubricating the prison door's hinges of occupation, an exercise that is far from being an instrument of development.

Enacting statehood

If for the USAID and the WB the normalization of closure-related infrastructure is mostly driven by an economic rational, for the PA endorsing controversial projects such as fabric of life roads can also be seen as attempts to enacting statehood and sovereignty over the Bantustan through the state building rituals associated to infrastructure development. Indeed, the repair, rehabilitation and construction of road infrastructure increasingly acquired a prominent role in the PA's agenda after the intifada. This is reflected in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP), which highlights the crucial role of developing sound infrastructure such as roads, electricity or water as the backbone of the economy and to enable progress towards the implementation of the Government's entire national policy agenda (see PRDP 2007, 2011). The plan assumes that establishing Palestinian 'facts on the ground', in the form of efficient institutions and infrastructures, will generate bottom-up growth and facilitate state building. As former

[50] Projects within the West Bank include the road leading to Qalandia Checkpoint in the Ramallah Area or the Container Checkpoint in Bethlehem. Project on the border of the West Bank include Huwwara military checkpoint.
[51] Interview with former USAID's subcontractor consultant. Ramallah. August, 2012

Palestinian Prime Minister and chief architect of the PRDP Salam Fayyad put it, rolling out infrastructure and building institutions is about “the power of ideas translated into facts on the ground – taking Palestinian statehood from abstract concept to reality” (Fayyad, 2010). Despite these lofty ideals and confronted to the blunt realities and asymmetric power relations of occupation however, the PA ended up instilled a logic of adapting to and improving the conditions of settler colonialism to some of the plan’s infrastructure projects. This is the case of the ‘Road Improvement’ (RI) program that seeks to rehabilitate the Palestinian road network by incorporating fabric of life roads such as the infamous Wadi Al Nar corridor. As in the case of the USAID, the PA disguises the political nature of these roads as assets capable of increasing national prosperity, enhancing the quality of life, restoring economic growth or enabling private sector development (PRDP, 2007). Roads are however not the only example in which the PA has been compelled to lend its formal approval to settler related infrastructure that actually undermines prospects of statehood and liberation. In effect, the Oslo framework has facilitated this practice in a number of other instances such as the approval of water infrastructure projects that enable the further expansion of colonial settlements (Selby, 2013).

This mobilization and distortion of the symbolic and material character of infrastructure reveals how endorsing fabric of life roads becomes on the one hand a way of ante-posing ‘development’ efforts to the struggle against occupation. And, on the other, it indicates the PA’s obsessive impetus to appear ‘real’ by enacting state policies that it considers commensurate with international ‘norms’ to gain local and overseas recognition. Lending legitimacy to fabric of life roads and closure related infrastructure is thus not only a way to cover up widespread colonial fragmentation and racist policies it is also a desperate attempt at showing that the Palestinian enclaves, like in the case of South African Bantustans such as Transkei, has “acquired ‘modern facilities’ enacted and rehearsed through prestige projects and modernizing etiquette” (Jones, 2002:39). As Fayyad has consistently argued, “Once you get the whole world thinking that we are ready for a state — that it looks like a state, that there are government processes and infrastructure — then the only thing left to deal with is ending the occupation” (Sanders, 2011). This position underlines how politics is declared an unhelpful distraction to the work of development, politics as a dirty word in a context of military occupation. Moreover, this faith in the universal incantations of state building not only exacerbates the contradictions between PA’s development aims and the actually existing structural settler conditions, it also increases the alienation of and gap with the Palestinian population. In fact, even when these celebrated ‘national infrastructural achievements’ have improved the lives of many Palestinians in the short-term; on the ground the political attitude

towards these projects is often one of skepticism. Take for instances these incisive local sayings: "The PA is covering the road to self-determination in asphalt", "We have the sewers; all that's left is the sovereignty", or "The streets of Ramallah are paved with white stones – who needs Jerusalem?" (Kanafani, 2011).

Taken together these are precisely the rituals of development and state building that were disrupted by the apartheid road controversy and that highlight the material and symbolic aspects of the spatialities of development in the Palestinian context. These attempts by international development actors to normalizing fabric of life roads show that not only are these deceitfully portrayed as symbols of progress coterminous with development and economic growth; its territorialization is also seen as constitutive of power and legitimacy, a form of making visible the 'state in the making'. Most importantly, the formal approval of these projects ultimately lends legitimacy to and reinforces Israel's colonial policies. In effect, as Christopher Parker suggests, uncritical aid giving, and I would add national development practice, "only serve to make effective Palestinian disempowerment under the guise of autonomy bearable over the short-term, while Israel pursues its strategic interests of procuring sovereignty over the land and its resources". The irony, Parker continues, "is that in order to sustain a process which claims to be leading towards the building of a Palestinian state, the tactics which are being used to sustain the process undermine the future ability of that state to sustain itself" (Parker, 1999:226).

CONCLUSIONS

Attentive to critics who argue that the development literature has focused too narrowly on infrastructure without acknowledging the relations of power in which these networks are invested, as well as those who call for more attention to exploring the distinctive and specific spatial nature of settler colonialism (Banivanua Mar and Edmonds, 2010), this paper has provided a framework to explore the uneven and racialized nature of infrastructure development in a contemporary settler colonial context. One, which might be alone in being subjected to a form of settler colonialism that receives the support of a cohort of international development actors and financial institutions to effectively sustain and reproduce itself. For if, as Neve Gordon contains, Oslo's ingenious idea was to outsource the responsibility of occupation to the native administration (Gordon 2008), no less effective has been Israel´s engagement of a broad coalition of donors to provide a veneer of legitimacy and generous financial resources that actively support the relentless dispossession of the Palestinian population.

Through reconstructing the genealogy of fabric of life roads in the West Bank, this study has shown how these networks are bundled with larger geopolitical and geoeconomic processes, and it has also interrogated their capacity to hold a developmentalist vision which as our case demonstrates is in practice productive of segregation patterns. As such, this paper demonstrates the ways in which these roads are profoundly embedded in development practices and discourses structured around coherent narratives of economic growth, peace and state building that distort, rationalize and consolidate the concrete realities of settler colonial subordination. By exposing the material and symbolic assumptions and premises underpinning the development of fabric of life roads, this paper illustrates the complex and contingent ‘power geometries’ (Massey, 1993) shaping these networks but also how they are the result from the mediation of interests and demands from a wide range of actors –including the settler state, the military as well as donors and the native administration— that together influence and reshape Palestinian geographies. This reveals not only the complicity of international and national development practice in shaping settler colonialism but also how the later is not so much the product of a linear plan by a single actor but rather a contingent process that emerges from a multiplicity of shifting and opportunistic acts of political and economic self-interest. A caveat which as this paper has shown allows to moving beyond accounts that underestimate the role of particular actors seen to be neutral or to advance Palestinian interests in ways that raise crucial questions about their accountability.

By critically engaging with infrastructure projects, as a central feature of the development enterprise, we hope to have contributed thus to a better understanding of the contemporary political challenges facing the Palestinian development endeavor. As such, the case study advanced in this paper has not only exposed how particular projects with positive short-term impacts enable the further colonial fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic in the long rung, it has also sought to underline broader aspects of the Palestinian development project. And more specifically how the socio-economic and spatial inequalities built into the Oslo architecture are internalized and manifested through the spatialities of development in the West Bank. Ultimately, this paper has attempted to show the ways in which settler colonialism solicits development as a way to territorialize itself. In other words, how development is transformed into a corollary of settler colonialism. The object of this paper is not however to dismiss development altogether, for as Joel Wainwright boldly puts it “we cannot not want development” (2008:10), but rather to problematize the prevalent confusion and optimism that exists around current forms of Palestinian development and the possibilities they might offer under a regime of prolonged settler colonialism.

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Electricityscapes

CHAPTER FOUR

Unplug and play: manufacturing collapse in Gaza

INTRODUCTION

More than four decades of Israeli occupation have transformed the Gaza Strip into a place where life has been rendered dispensable. It is a sacrificed space: a showcase where de-colonizing moments and outbursts of resistance are crushed in spatial performances that speak far beyond its borders. Nevertheless the actual contents of that showcase remain strangely unseen. Gaza is a space where territory and life is problematized as such; but the logistical and discursive procedures through which Gaza is made into target and a site of regulated humanitarian collapse remain hidden. How is this accomplished? And what explains its effectiveness? The aftermath of the Israeli redeployment within Gaza during the summer 2005 raises fundamental questions about how this event abstracted Gaza by way of distance. Concurrently, it demonstrates how reassembling the regime of control and containment contributed to legitimize the criminalization of everyday life and its sustaining fabric. As French philosopher Henri Lefebvre aphorizes, “there is a politics of space because space is political” (Lefebvre, 1976:33). Studying the exercise of power through actual colonial infrastructure and bureaucracies thus aims at revealing the enactment of a particularly violent politics of space.

In what follows I work with these ideas to expose the ways in which, in the wake of Gaza’s unilateral disengagement plan, the Israeli government reinforces the manipulation and destruction of infrastructural networks as a political tool to create and regulate a humanitarian crisis[52]. In doing this, the paper is an attempt to develop a preliminary and critical geopolitics of the infrastructure-violence nexus in the Gaza Strip. The paper begins by describing the spatial reassemblage of Gaza following the Israeli evacuation. I argue that this new assemblage represents a new colonial reality whereby infrastructural networks gain force as geopolitical sites to assert spatial control and as biopolitical tools to regulate and suppress life. I then look

[52] The material collected for this paper and the actual writing of it was previous to the Israeli war of aggression against Gaza during the winter 2008-2009. Although these events have not being incorporated into this article, the bloody attack and its unfolding consequences are of the outmost importance for this study in so far as they are proof of the violent turn on Israel’s occupation that this research locates in Gaza after the so called disengagement. This is particularly so in terms of the misuse and abuse of infrastructure networks for geo-and-bio political purposes as they are exposed here.

at the mobilization of discourses, strategies and doctrines that criminalize these public utilities as 'terrorist infrastructure', turning these essential assets into political, 'legal', and military targets. The destruction of Gaza's power plant and the subsequent sanctions on fuel supplies are used as an example to expose the wider political and public health implications of targeting these life-support systems. Finally I reflect upon the idea of *infrastructural violence* and its role in the current humanitarian catastrophe.

A MOCK FAREWELL PARTY

In the early morning of September 12 2005, after shutting down the gate of the Kissufim crossing, Gaza commander Brig Gen Aviv Kochavi, the last soldier to leave the Strip, declared: "The mission has been completed … The responsibility for whatever takes place inside falls upon the [Palestinian] Authority" (Shany, 2006:3). These words and an executive decree proclaiming the end of military rule concluded the unilateral disengagement plan in Israel's "officialdom", seemingly putting an end to 38 years of occupation of the Gaza Strip. The previous month left memorable images of a disengagement drama broadcasted around the world. Unarmed Israeli security forces pulled out defiant and distressed settlers from houses and synagogues. Meanwhile bulldozers reduced the suburban colonial landscape of Israeli settlements, military infrastructure, agricultural fields, and industrial states to rubble. In less than a month, more than eight thousand settlers were removed and the most *visible* infrastructure of the occupation completely dismantled. The world celebrated the disengagement as a move towards peace.

Yet Gaza remained subject to a suffocating closure (see Figure 8). Its territory fragmented. And the specter of Israel intervention loomed ever-present. Furthermore, Gaza's economy had been de-developed over four decades of Israeli occupation and exposed, together with the West Bank, to a campaign of outright *urbicide* after the beginning of the second Intifada in 2001 (Roy, 2004; Graham, 2002). This open-ended military operation violently rewrote Gaza's geography and particularly the northern locations of Beith Hanoun, Beit Lahia, and Jabalia and the southern areas of Khan Yunis and Rafah. It was a systematic effort to 'shrink by bomb and bulldozer' these living spaces so as to fit the narrow strip within the expansion of the mid-nineties wall, the buffer zone and the spatial designs of Israel's colonial project. The human and material costs of this campaign, which were amplified by frequent closures, left Gaza in a permanent state of crisis. Yet the praised 'peace' initiative from the early nineties, the Oslo accords, was in fact the main responsible in regularizing a framework that enforced a state of permanent dependency as well as spatialities of fragmentation and segregation (Parker, 1996). Disengagement was in fact a variation of an

Oslo strategy that to a very real extent allowed Israeli planners to apply doctrine and concepts that had been drawn long before –namely Allon, Dayan, Drobless and Sharon Plans (Gregory, 2004).

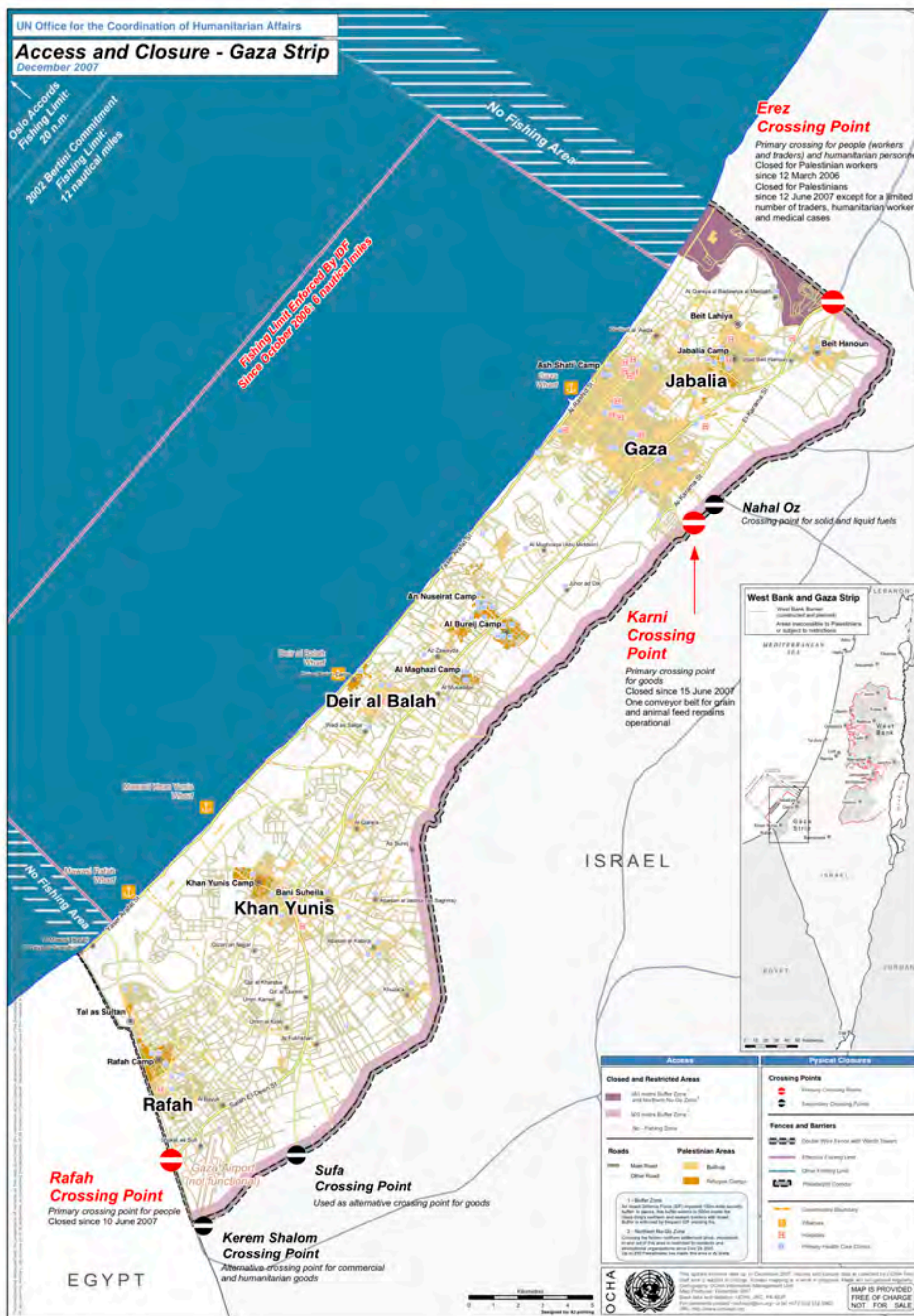

Figure 8: Access and Closure. Gaza Strip, 2007 (Source: UN-OCHA)

As such, the disengagement was one of Ariel Sharon's –Israel's former Prime Minister—final legacies to Zionism, a staged spectacle for massive consumption both at home and abroad. In Guy Debord's terms it could be described as an event intended for paralyzing history and memory and for suppressing the historical and present time of Israel's colonial enterprise; a disengagement from time to create a false consciousness

of a fake farewell party (see Debord, 1994). Dov Weissglas, the architect and leading advocate and negotiator behind the plan, considered disengagement as a device to freeze time in a way that postponed indefinitely any option for peace. In his own words: "[Disengagement] supplies the amount of formaldehyde that is necessary so there will not be a political process with the Palestinians" (Shavit, 2004). The unilateral move had nevertheless higher stakes. Sharon's plan aimed at getting rid of Gaza's economic and demographic burden while revisiting its legal status as an occupied territory (Cook, 2006). The Israeli Government could thus free its hands from any binding responsibility, as an occupier state, towards Gaza's territory and its inhabitants. Spectacle, as recreation of a powerful repertoire of images depicting the dismantlement of the colonial landscape and the evacuation of a civilian and military army, thus preceded and supersede any sense about the real meaning of disengagement. The evacuation certainly took place, but neither the occupation nor military law ended as Sharon try to convey from the podium of the General Assembly a month after the evacuation (Israel Prime Minister Office, 2005). The transformation of Gaza into an open-air prison was but a partial geographical solution to a stagnant political-diplomatic and economic situation. Israel disengaged with time in that it tried to erase the colonial past, yet it engaged with space in a distinct scale to uphold the colonial present.

COLONIAL RESCALING AND 'REMOTE CONTROL' OCCUPATION

It is in this context that the disengagement turned the spotlight to a delusional reality of a liberated Gaza ready to prove itself to the world. The unilateral decision to evacuate the illegal settlers from Gaza was portrayed as the definitive step towards ending the occupation, a model that could inspire the future redeployment of Israel from the West Bank, and even an economic opportunity to transform Gaza into the Dubai of the Mediterranean. Yet the reality turned out to be very different. A land-based military presence was substituted by a 'remote control' occupation in which aerial bombardment, siege, sanctions, and infrastructural networks played an increasing role, albeit not a new one, in the control and management of territory and everyday life. The very text of the disengagement plan explicitly provided much of the 'new' colonial order (Knesset, 2004). The State of Israel unilaterally decided to keep the right to guard and monitor the external perimeter of Gaza while regulating all incoming and outgoing flows of goods and people. The air space, the sea and the electromagnetic field remained under their sole security and control. Additionally, and according to the plan, the Government allowed the continuation of the supply of water, electricity, gas and petrol 'as a rule'. Essential services were thus to be provided by the very infrastructure that ties Gaza to Israel and that was left untouched after the evacuation. In addition, Israel preserved "its

inherent right of self defense, both preventive and reactive, including where necessary the use of force, in respect of threats emanating from the Gaza Strip" (2004:2). Thus the plan exposed what was little more than garrison's realignment behind the 'penitentiary' wall awaiting a sign to punish the inmates of the 'liberated' prison.

Twelve days after the evacuation the Israeli Air Forces carried out several attacks in the strip killing two persons, injuring 24 and damaging 17 houses and a school (Al-Haq, 2006). The raids were an assertion of power and a reminder that the occupation had not ended. Airpower not only provided surveillance capacity over the allegedly unoccupied territory, but it was also turned into a recurrent instrument of intimidation and death. Sonic booms – shocks caused by jets breaking the sound barrier—, which reportedly cause anxiety, panic and fear in children as well as miscarriages in women, became a daily and nightly routine after disengagement (El-Sarraj, 2005). These practices exposed the new spatial scale of colonial engagement and, as Darryl Li argues, confirmed airpower as the routine method to manage the occupation (Li, 2006). Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, first air officer to hold the head of Israeli military intelligence, defined the new rules of engagement in 2004: "Our vision of air control zeroes in on the notion of control. We're looking at how you control a city or a territory from the air when it's no longer legitimate to hold or occupy that territory on the ground." (Li, 2006:48).

In addition to airpower, infrastructural networks acquired a critical role in post-evacuated Gaza in two respects: firstly, in reassembling the regime of spatial control and secondly, in manufacturing a regulated humanitarian collapse. These seemingly banal and ubiquitous systems have been historically strategic assets binding the occupied Palestinian territories –West Bank and Gaza—to Israel, as well as the essential life arteries that sustain and facilitate the expansion of the settlement enterprise. These networks epitomize an unbreakable colonial umbilical cord that facilitates the maintenance and exercise of power and the instrumentalization over both population and territory. Stephen Graham argues how infrastructures, because of the ways in which they connect, bind, and enable life and movement, become essential targets and potential instruments of war (Graham, 2005). Describing the 'geometry of the occupation' in Palestine, Eyal Weizman explains the way "[Israeli] architecture and planning were used as the continuation of war by other means. Just like the tank, the gun, and the bulldozer, building matter and infrastructure were used to achieve tactical and strategic aims. It was an urban warfare in which urbanity provided not only the theatre of war but its very weapons and ammunition" (2004:172). Weizman also notes how Israel maintains its power over and underneath the Palestinian territory by exercising control over the water aquifers as well

as through the airways and electromagnetic fields (2004:190). Infrastructure networks thus become effectively essential geopolitical artifacts that expand Israel’s power as tentacles over and underneath the territory.

LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AS BIO-NECRO-POLITICAL TOOL

The mediating geography of tubes, pipes, wires and corridors that pierces Gaza is thus an essential mechanism to control and regulate any incoming or outgoing flow to the strip. Infrastructure networks are conceived as an umbilical cord that ties colonized bodies and territory to the colonizer while at the same time enforce a severe and enduring dependency. An anxious uncertainty and unpredictability is the functioning principle of these technical systems. Palestinians are in this way systematically subjected to the will of the State of Israel which designs, manages and interferes at will with the proper functioning of these life support arteries. Given its capacity to manage and control public utilities, the State of Israel is able to create the possibilities for life, but also to induce failure and death. This environment where seemingly insignificant technical systems periodically intrude upon the lives of the Palestinians hardly makes it to the attention of the mainstream media or academia. And when it does, it is difficult to convey the extent to which these modes of bio-power reach to the utmost details of everyday life. Infrastructural networks bring the politics of colonial occupation to the very spaces of daily life practice, invading the most intimate and private ones: the living rooms, kitchens and bathrooms of the Palestinian homes (see Barakat, 1998 and Agre, 2001). As Graham reminds us, the interconnected nature of these infrastructural ‘scapes’ and the fact that they co-evolve in their interrelationships with territorial development is what makes them seamlessly woven into the fabric of social and economic life (Graham 2005). Infrastructure networks are thus the life support systems of modern societies, source of their vitality and yet source of its own fragility and manipulation.

Since the 1967 occupation Israel pursued a double policy regarding life support systems. On the one hand it took over the existing infrastructure networks in the West Bank and Gaza, and on the other, that very infrastructure was connected to the Israeli networks creating a total dependency relation that remains in place to this day. In 1994, Oslo was essential in institutionalizing and normalizing this control apparatus that included both the very material (and immaterial) infrastructure of these networks as well as the related bureaucracies in place to regulate them. Israel was thus able to retain absolute power over natural resources, and flows of people, goods, money and essential services. In addition to the control and regulation of existing networks,

the development of large and small infrastructural projects in the Palestinian areas remains to a large extend subjected to the approval by the State of Israel. This is primarily done through a dedicated infrastructural branch under the so-called civil administration; the sovereign authority in the territories that works as a bureaucratized apparatus that intrudes and actively intervenes in the daily life of the population (Tamari 1983). As it appears on the website of the Israel Defense Forces: "This branch organizes the operations of civil administration bodies in the region of Judea and Samaria [West Bank] and the *Gaza penitentiary* in all issues pertaining to water, plumbing, electricity, communication, international funding projects, and communication for the settlements in Judea and Samaria" (emphasis added) (Israeli Defense Forces, 2010). To this very day, the civil administration, mainly through the 'joint cooperation committees' created as a result of Oslo, engage Palestinians and international donors and aid agencies in infrastructure project negotiations that are either endlessly delayed, seriously decapitated, or rejected for the most part (Selby 2003). Also interesting was the way Oslo turned up to be exquisitely vague when defining the transfer of infrastructure competences to the Palestinian Authority, yet extremely precise in the very amounts and quantities to be provided through these life support systems. This is particularly the case for water, electricity, fuel and telecommunications as reflected in the interim agreement (IA, 1995). Israeli scientists and experts, military staff and humanitarian experts are left to provide estimations deemed necessary to fit the population growth, thus fixing and regulating the 'suitable' flow of essential services to be distributed.

The modalities of infrastructural violence brought by the second intifada and particularly by the evacuation and subsequent outright closure and separation of the Gaza strip, were nevertheless different in nature from previous practices of infrastructural rule in so far as they reconstituted and invested earlier colonial modes of biopower into more lethal forms[53]. Neve Gordon has shown that "it is the shifting emphasis on one or the other modes of power, rather than the introduction of new forms of control, that helps explain the extensive transformation in Israel's occupation [since 1967]" (Gordon, 2008:11). This, according to Gordon, helps to distinguish different, yet organically linked, periods of the occupation that respond to how different forms of control operate,

[53] To be clear, the notion of biopower devised by Foucault to explain the forming violence(s) of "modernity" in the liberal European state, one concerned with maximizing the health and wealth of the population (Foucault 1978), cannot be applied in the colonial context of Palestine without qualification. Here, Zionist settler colonialism gave way to a biopolitics (in combination with other forms of power) that racially objectify and geographically segregate the indigenous population. This was done with the aim to "establish a delicate balance in which the health of the population and especially the physical terrain on which it exist are minimized without effecting a total elimination" (Hanafi, 2009:113).

interact with each other and how they produce certain impacts (2008). The modes in which biopower was infused through infrastructure networks to exercise violence over bodies and territory in post-evacuated Gaza, effectively exposed the most ugly face of the radical relationality between colonizer and colonized. The geopolitics of infrastructure networks was inscribed by a biopolitics that intrudes and shapes the very mode of being and dying. Two phenomena are at work in the spatialization of violence, namely a techno-politics of space and a biopolitical instrumentalization of the body. Life is coupled in a cyborg-like binary –of human and machine—to the material appendix of networked infrastructure. The very infrastructure that serves as a tool of control and regulation is turned into a life threatening system; 'addicted' bodies dependent on the supply of the basic services machine to the extreme of death (Gandy, 2005). The logics of infrastructural violence after disengagement are not as much concerned with inscribing bodies within a disciplinary apparatus as with placing bodies in the threshold of life and death. This manipulation of infrastructure forces a permanent experience of 'being in pain', a way to confer the status of 'living dead' to the object populations. This is what Mbembe describes as necropolitics, a contemporary form of subjugation of life to the power of death that drives the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations (Mbembe, 2003). However as Bhungalia notes, "perhaps, whereas Foucault produces a totalizing narrative about life, Mbembe constructs a totalizing discourse of death". Moreover she argues that "while Gaza certainly resembles Mbembe's 'death world', the Israeli state has expressed, as well, vested interest in regulating Palestinian life at a biological minimum." (Bhungalia, 2009:355). Looking at infrastructure networks nevertheless reveals that practices of infrastructural violence show different modes of biopower in specific time-and-space configurations and thus, have the potential to enforce one or both logics –optimization of life or death—simultaneously or in different historical moments as in the case of Gaza.

FABRICATING 'TERROR INFRASTRUCTURE'

Underlying the use of life support systems, as both geopolitical sites and biopolitical tools, lies the mobilization of a repertoire of ideas, forms, images and imaginings that fabricate Gaza as an alien space devoid of humanity; a 'terrorist space' where the urban and rural habitat and its support systems are reduced to 'pre-emptive' sites of punishment or destruction (Finoki, 2009). These discursive mechanics are a prominent feature of Israel's particular and lengthy 'war on terror' against the Palestinians. Gregory (2003:307), building on Edward Said, highlights how imaginative geographies fold distance into difference through a series of spatialisations, spatial demarcations that define and oppose

"one's familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is theirs.". Moreover, Gregory (2004b:185) shows how *imaginative geographies* are "in some substantial sense *performative*", and thus potentially *performances of space* given that "it produces the effect that it names". The criminalization of Gaza works very much in this way. A systematic categorization and representation of Gaza as a 'hostile territory' allows Israel to repress political and violent resistance –to colonial occupation—through symbolic and actual spatial enactments of violence.

The categorization of Gaza as 'enemy entity' is a clear-cut example of the way the machinery of *imaginative geographies* is put into motion and how it is used to justify the cuts and disruptions of infrastructure networks as a measure of collective punishment. Following frequent barrages of Palestinian homemade rockets, the 19 September 2007, three months after Hamas took control over the Gaza strip in what journalist David Rose described as a counter-coup against Fatah (Rose, 2008), Israel's security cabinet unanimously decided that Gaza was a 'hostile territory'. In light of this decision the cabinet decided to adopt a series of recommendations presented earlier by the security establishment that included: "… continuation of military and counter-terrorist operations against the terrorist organizations. Additional sanctions will be placed on the Hamas regime in order to restrict the passage of various goods to the Gaza Strip and reduce the supply of fuel and electricity. Restrictions will also be placed on the movement of people to and from the Gaza Strip. The sanctions will be enacted following a legal examination, while taking into account both the humanitarian aspects relevant to the Gaza Strip and the intention to avoid a humanitarian crisis" (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007:1).

Infrastructural networks are in this way transformed into 'terrorist infrastructure', an 'evil apparatus' that sustains 'insurgent activity', a threat that creates local and regional instability and that therefore needs to be aimed at (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008). News headlines, institutional declarations, and political speeches, uniformly and incessantly quote and call for the need to 'dismantle', 'target', 'disrupt', 'eliminate' or 'operate against' Gaza's supporting 'terrorist infrastructure'. The same life dependent systems that distribute electricity, fuel, water, food or sewage become incorporated into a narrative and a policy that translates into indiscriminate punishment. Law protects civilians from direct attack but, as Thomas W. Smith argues, discrimination turns to fiction "when extended to electrical grids, water supplies and other infrastructure that are the sinews of everyday life" (Smith 2002:361). The sanctions and disruptions are enacted under a political-juridical register that justifies what is legally unjustifiable –under international law— while appealing to an

exceptional and-or emergency situation. For the State of Israel the logic is one of *lawfare,* what former American General and military judge Charles Dunlap calls "the use of law as a weapon of war". Eyal Weizman expands this notion to explain the elastic nature of the law and the power of military action in the case of Gaza. He argues how Gaza is turned into an experiment to test new warfare techniques and where "certain limits are tested and explored: the limits of the legal, the limits of the ethical, the limits of the tolerable, the limits of what can be done to people in the name of 'war on terror'." (Weizman, 2009:5). The fabrication of the 'hostile territory' formula thus not only rewrites geography and creates a dedicated legal terminology; it becomes, paradoxically, the means to legitimize the exercise of repression. Yet indiscriminate violence, as the Security Cabinet agreed, is one with 'humanitarian concerns'.

INFRASTRUCTURAL OXYGEN: "CUT IT ALL OFF!"

The fabrication of *imaginative geographies* has been an essential mechanism to single out infrastructure networks as assets that need to be either disrupted or destroyed, as well as a powerful tool to mobilize both political and public consent. A post-evacuated Gaza emptied of settlers and fully isolated, provided the ideal scenario to exercise collective punishment through the interconnected network of infrastructures that previously served both Israelis and Palestinians. Jonathan Cook notes how Ariel Sharon's team first proposed cutting off electricity to the strip after disengagement (Cook, 2008). The measure, as Cook argues, was rejected for both being suspected of violating international law and as a move that could undermine Fatah's chance of wining the January 2006 elections (Cook, 2008b). Hamas did win the elections, and in the early morning hours of the 28 June 2006, less than a year after the disengagement, the Israeli Air Forces fired eight missiles that destroyed the six generators of the only Power Plant in Gaza. This decision was justified as an attempt to release an Israeli soldier captured three days earlier over the border. B'tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, however, reported that the attack constituted a war crime and that it "derive directly from one cold, calculated decision, made by Israel's prime minister, defense minister, and the IDF chief of staff" (B'tselem 2006:2). In addition the report expressed its reservations about the leitmotiv of the attack, arguing that it had nothing to do with the attempts to release the soldier or achieve military needs.

Prior to the bombing of the electricity plant, Gaza used about 220 megawatts of power: approximately 100 megawatts produced by the Palestinian Electric Corporation (PEC), and the remaining 110 megawatts provided by the Israeli Electric Corporation Company (IEC).

Yet, as B'tselem highlights, "in addition to the direct dependence on electricity from Israel, Gaza's electricity sector is indirectly dependent on Israel: all the fuel and natural gas needed to operate the turbines of the Gaza power plant come from Israel" (B'tselem, 2006:5) The destruction of the power plant added to, and enhanced, what already was a chronic dependency on a legacy of colonial infrastructure used to manipulate and regulate the life of the colonized. Yet this particular attack was important in so far as it manifested the turn from a "regulatory" to an "asphyxiatory" application of power. The destruction of the power plant was but the kickoff for military operation codenamed Summer Rains. Rains did indeed fall over the power plant but also drenched Gaza's infrastructural fabric, particularly electricity networks. The ground military operation that followed the destruction of Gaza's power plant targeted the power distribution network, as well as water mains, sewage systems, roads, bridges, or telecommunication systems. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated the damage caused to Palestinian infrastructure by IDF incursions, shelling and rocket attacks to be USD 15.5.million; not including the USD 15 million in damage caused by the IAF air strike on the Gaza power plant (OCHA, 2006).

Bombing the power plant left Gaza entirely dependent on Israel's production of electricity and fuel supplies and marked the beginning of an open policy of infrastructural violence. Haim Ramon, Minister of Justice at the time and former Vice Premier, elaborated on the issue of infrastructure and collective punishment following the decision to declare Gaza strip a 'hostile territory'. Ramon referred to the term 'infrastructural oxygen' as a new doctrine advocating the cutting off electricity, fuel and water supply to Gaza (Levy 2007). Ramon already proposed this doctrine a year earlier by suggesting an air warfare campaign –as opposed to land invasion—that would turn Lebanon into "a country with no water, no electricity, no fuel" (Azoulay, 2007). Although the security cabinet apparently rejected his plan, after the invasion, Amnesty International published a report accusing the State of Israel of war crimes for deliberately destroying Lebanon's civilian infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2006). Nevertheless Ramon was not alone in voicing this 'new' approach to deal with Gaza. For instances, Tzipi Livni, former Foreign Minister, backed his proposal and added that it is "inconceivable that life in Gaza continues to be normal" (Levy 2007:1). These declarations only added to increasing political pronouncements that unanimously supported repressive military actions targeting life itself. Dov Wiesglass, the person behind the disengagement, had already provided the way forward in what seemed to be an amusing security cabinet meeting immediately after Hamas had won elections. Israel's policy, he said, would be "like an appointment with a dietician. The Palestinians will get a lot thinner, but won't die."

(Levy, 2006: 1). These events uncovered a very troubling reality; that the Palestinian cannot be seen to be living without pain, that the spectacle, the "witnessing" effect in the moment of asphyxiating near death is in itself part of the life-source of the regime which demands the Palestinian collapse. As Bhungalia argues, "In Gaza, death is not 'something to be hidden away' but something to be strategically exposed. The spectacle of death is a critical reminder of the stakes involved in continued Hamas rule." (Bhungalia, 2008:355). Ramon's infrastructure oxygen doctrine followed this logic, for infrastructure networks provided the biopolitical tool to regulate a diet of electricity, fuel, gas and water. Yet, as we shall see the 'won't die' variable in this equation happened to be wrong.

The full realization and sanction of the doctrine came in September 2007 with the plan commissioned to Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilani to limit essential services in Gaza. For Vilani the logic of the plan was as follows: "because this is an entity that is hostile to us there is not reason for us to supply them with electricity *beyond the minimum required to prevent a crisis*" (Greenberg, 2007) (emphasis added). The plan established that the supply of electricity and fuel would be reduced to a minimum that preserves the 'humanitarian needs'. This shift towards the more benevolent realm of the humanitarian functioned as a way to cover an unlawful politically driven decision, and to redirect national security discourses away from military based approaches (see Berman, 2005). The 'humanitarian minimum', decided according to State and military calculations, reflects, as Darryl Li argues, how this notion "reduces the needs, aspirations, and rights of 1.4 million human beings to an exercise in counting calories, megawatts, and other abstract, one-dimensional units that measure distance from death." (Li, 2008:2). The plan managed to reduce the Gaza population to a condition of *living death* –as oppose to politically qualified individuals with rights— dependent on Israel's will to let them live or die in function of their tolerance and not of any right to life. Whether occupied or hostile territory, and independently of the continuous qassam rocket barrages, the State of Israel had decisively adopted an open policy to target infrastructural networks –and thus the population as a whole—that allegedly constituted war crimes, collective punishment and sanctions against the Palestinian population (Gisha, 2008). Yet when Defense Minister Ehud Barak gave green light to the plan in October, an article published by the English version of Yedioth Ahronoth –Israel's most-read newspaper—argued that: "the decision was not part of punishment measures, but rather an implementation of Israel's gradual disengagement from Gaza following Hamas' takeover of the Strip" (Greenberg, 2007). The talkback comments at the bottom of the article are indicative of the reader's mood: "cut it all off", "Barak what a sissy

your are", "turn off the power in the West Bank as well" or "Turning Off Power Helps Slow Global Warming".

THE THOUSAND DEATHS OF GAZA

Cuts in electricity and fuel, although not officially, started immediately after the destruction of Gaza's power plant. Already in July 2006, Gisha, the Israeli legal centre for freedom of movement, had issued various statements directed to the Defence minister calling to restrain from further damaging the resources critical for normal life, as well as to restore the interrupted supply of fuel and necessary equipment to continue the provision of electricity. In the aftermath of operation Summer Rains (2005) OCHA reported that Gaza households were receiving six to eight hours of electricity per day, while most facilities in the urban areas were getting two to three hours of running water (OCHA 2006). Several organizations –Adalah, Gisha, Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Al-Haq or B'Tselem but to name a few— were crucial in raising visibility to the severe consequences of bringing forward a policy that targeted Gaza's fabric of life. What was described as a critical socio-economic and public health situation only worsened in the following years as a result of Israel's policy to maintain systematic electrical interruptions, power stoppages, fuel cuts, and a strict closure impeding the entrance of spare parts to repair network damages, let alone other 'non-essential humanitarian needs' such as medicine or food (Aid Agency of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2008).

The 'infrastructural oxygen' doctrine worked as a chain reaction that immediately spread across the Gaza strip shaking every dimension of everyday life. Directly or indirectly every inhabitant of the strip was affected. Modern life as we know it was forced to a halt. Electricity disruption impacted on home electric devices such as refrigerators, making impossible to preserve food, or elevators that stopped running in the multi-storied buildings that sustain Gaza's urban density. Many family businesses such as bakeries or sewing ateliers had to close. Without electricity, water could not be extracted from the wells and then put into the distribution system to be later pumped into houses or industries. Neither could dirty waters from houses be transferred to sewage treatment plants. In addition, health services were severely affected by the impossibility to obtain regular power supply to run lifesaving equipment, generate oxygen, practice surgery operations, treat dialysis patients, or maintain a minimal level of sanitation to avoid epidemics. The only option left to replace electric supply were fuel run generators, only in possession of some institutions and to those who could afford it. Nevertheless generators constantly failed after prolonged periods of time, and sanctions made it extremely difficult and expensive to obtain the necessary fuel to use these devices as a reliable

alternative source. A businessman from Gaza captured the severity of the crisis during the summer of 2006: “We have been thrown back to the way people lived 100 years ago, with no electricity. We do not have water, we don’t have milk for our kids” (Gisha, 2006:1).

The results of the infrastructural oxygen doctrine designed in the offices of the Israeli Ministry of Justice, were but a calculated application of complex military doctrine underpinning contemporary infrastructural warfare. As Graham (2005) explains, these attacks are systematic de-modernization efforts that target not only military forces but their civil societies as well. Targeting the electricity power plant and disrupting fuel distribution is considered in military terms as an ‘effect-based-operation’ (EBO). Israel knew too well that the consequences of this attack would have immediate and spiral effects aiming to induce complete societal chaos.

The flow of electricity and fuel was at this stage relentlessly reduced to achieve the proposed aim of a ‘humanitarian minimum’. The petition to the Israeli Supreme Court made by several human rights organizations, in cooperation with the deputy director of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility and a farmer from Beit Hanoun, did not impede the State of Israel to continue the allegedly illegal collective punishment while the hearings were still going on (Gisha 2008). After several months the petition was finally rejected by Israel’s Supreme Court, despite the documented evidence of harm to civilians caused by fuel and electricity cuts. As the Director of the legal center for Arab minority rights in Israel (Adalah) Hassan Jabari argued: “according to the Supreme Court’s decision, it is permitted to harm Palestinian civilians and create a humanitarian crisis for political reasons. This constitutes a war crime under international criminal law.” (Gisha, 2008b:2). On the evening of January 20 2008, few months after partial service had been restored, Gaza’s power plant ceased production. From this moment on the plant ceased production several times and the flow of electricity becomes continuously discontinued only reinforcing a situation of permanent collapse (see Figure 9).

The ‘humanitarian implosion’ affecting Gaza was reflected in two reports published in 2008 by several recognized international organizations (OXFAM, 2008; OCHA, 2008). The documents provide substantial evidence of the public health catastrophe lived in the Gaza strip: three quarters of Gaza’s population are dependent on food aid, unemployment is close to half the total population, only 23 out of 3,900 industrial enterprises are currently operational, schools had cancelled classes high on energy consumption, hospitals experience power cuts lasting for 8-12 hours, almost 30% of the population does not receive running water, 80% of the drinking water supplied does not meet WHO

standards, 70% of agricultural land in Gaza are no longer being irrigated, and 70 millions liters of sewage goes into the sea due the lack of fuel to pump or treat human waste resulting in significant environmental damage. Although these figures reveal the accumulation of years of siege and blockade, most of them are directly or indirectly a result of the destruction of infrastructure and the manipulation, cuts and restrictions on essential services.

Figure 9: Power Supply to the Gaza Strip, 2009 (Source: UN-OCHA)

Life in Gaza was suspended and readjusted to an unpredictable schedule entirely dependent on electricity and fuel supply. The power to impose

the everyday rhythms of life was exercised by Israel's easy-trigger finger over the 'on-off' switch button: a deliberate attack on public health aiming at the very fabric of life. The years following the destruction of the power plant exposed an elastic 'humanitarian crisis', suspended in time, and continuously 'on verge of collapse' or 'on the brink of disaster' (see Figure 10). As Karen Koning Abu Zayd, the head of UNRWA warned, "Gaza is on the threshold of becoming the first territory to be intentionally reduced to a state of abject destitution, with the knowledge, acquiescence and – some would say – encouragement of the international community." (McGirk, 2008:374). Yet, the real collapse of Gaza started with its occupation in 1967 (or even before) and has since then being intensified and postponed. As Patrick Wolfe notes, "settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" (Wolfe 2006:388). Post-disengagement Gaza only provided a new contained spatial scenario for a critical patient: an intensive care unit exposed to the world as a 'big brother' television show where the tension lies on observing a patient' struggle between death and life every time 'infrastructural oxygen' tubes are turned off and back on.

Figure 10: Transfer of industrial diesel from Israel to the Gaza Strip. November 2008 – January 2009 (Source: Gisha)

FUEL FOR THOUGHT

In deconstructing a particular historical event and its subsequent unfolding dynamics this paper has tried to highlight the ways in which colonial violence, in its discursive and material dimensions, is inscribed in physical space as well as in everyday life. By looking at infrastructural networks, the mediating mechanisms that support everyday life, this paper has shown how Israeli policies of collective punishment remain

enabled in post-disengagement Gaza. We have argued how a violent production of space involves discursive reworkings and imaginative geographies, as well as reassembling relations of subjugation. Infrastructural networks, usually taken for granted and neglected, become geopolitical sites and biopolitical tools where relations of power at a distance reach into the tiniest details of daily life through the rearrangements of basic service provision. In addition, the paper has exposed how the manipulation and systematic disconnection of these essential and critical systems has vast public health consequences. This is particularly so if we consider the long-term consequences of targeting and manipulating infrastructural networks as oppose to immediate effects of military attacks. The paper stresses the critical role that infrastructure networks have in manufacturing collapse in Gaza, nevertheless we need to be careful not to over-generalize or exaggerate about the role of these systems in compounding for the overall crisis. They have played a crucial role in combination with many other factors such as incessant military operations and an outright closure of goods and movement.

The exposure of the ways in which violence is exercised through infrastructure networks raises the need to "expand the range of referents of political violence beyond the anthropocentric horizon to include the material fabric of urban life" (Coward, 2006:419). Yet to only focus on the physical damage and disruptions to electrical, fuel, water and sewage networks would miss the point. Thus, as Muna Giacaman has argued, it is important to emphasize "the social and humanitarian elements that have significant impact on civilian health and life and future societal development." (Giacaman et al ,2004:289). Accordingly, a full analysis of the infrastructure-violence nexus must be sought in a study of the systems that enable connection across wider configurations in time and space, it is here that we can map and eventually understand the power of more subtle spatializing practices that seek to enable strategies of domination. The concept of *infrastructural violence* provides a particularly useful lens through which to study the systematic politics of spatial reengineering that undoes the ordinary geographies of everyday life by generating and unfolding a hostile topography of infrastructure networks for purposes of population management and repression as well as territorial segregation and control. That is, the violent abuse and misuse of the interconnected set of socio-technical systems that sustain modern societies.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Hooked on electricity: the charged political economy of electrification in Palestine

INTRODUCTION

In February 2012 a group of Palestinian activists set up a grassroots campaign against the Jerusalem District Electricity Corporation (JDEC), a Palestinian regional utility company that distributes electricity to the central West Bank region. As part of the campaign, the group organized a series of sit-ins and demonstrations in front of the company's headquarter in Ramallah to protest the recurring increase in electricity prices in a context of growing crisis and unemployment, intermittent frozen salaries, closure and prolonged colonial dispossession. These rare protests rendered visible a realm of techno-politics that usually remains invisibly embedded within wires and meters (Von Schnitzler, 2008). By opposing the rising price of electricity in the occupied Palestinian territories –the highest in the Arab world—these activists brought attention not only to the latest attempts of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to reform and privatize the electricity sector but also to a broader colonial legacy of electrification that has consolidated a profound relation of dependency and inequality. In effect, today, Israel provides up to 86 per cent of the electricity supply in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and Palestinian consumption per capita is 11 times lower than in Israel—the lowest in the region (Abualkhair, 2006).

This paper investigates the ways in which electricity comes to matter socially, politically and economically both symbolically and as a set of materials. A historical analytical focus on how these 'large technical systems' are constructed and governed offers a powerful way of thinking about electricity as a complex assemblage of actors, agents and processes that connect to, and drive, much debated processes of colonialism, capitalist uneven development and statecraft in Palestine. More specifically, the paper explores the political nature, spatial configurations and path-dependency logics underpinning the development and governance of these infrastructure networks in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The interest here is not so much in electricity per se but rather on how its assemblage allow us to explore the entangled nature of settler colonialism and neoliberal development –their shared genealogy and its contested nature (Tabar and Jabary Salamanca, 2013).

To explore the intricacies of electrification the paper advances a settler colonial perspective that brings geography related scholarship on infrastructure together with critical political economy studies. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, archival material, interviews, and development reports, the paper looks at attempts to privatize the electricity sector in Palestine against the background of a long and often neglected colonial history of Zionist electrification. In doing so the paper highlights the ways relations of dependency have been progressively grounded in the occupied Palestinian territories during the first decades of occupation, while at the same time how these relations are being gradually commodified.

The paper begins laying out a theoretical discussion about what infrastructures and electricity in particular can tell us about the nature of settler colonialism and capitalist forms of neoliberal development. Secondly, the paper locates the foundations of today's inequalities and dependency in the British mandate period, and more specifically on the decades following the 1967 occupation. In doing so the paper explores the contested genealogy of electrification and the colonial policies that define it. Thirdly, the paper looks at the ways in which the electricity reform is operationalized and rationalized in the aftermath of the Oslo accords. This illustrates how the ongoing neoliberal reform is taking root and most importantly with negligible consideration of the embedded inequalities that have characterized the electricity landscape since the early days of Zionist settler colonialism. The paper concludes highlighting the centrality of electrification to the Israel imperatives of settler colonialism, to capitalist modes of production and expansion, and to the reproduction of relations of dependency and inequality.

SEEING THROUGH (ELECTRICITY) INFRASTRUCTURE

From Lenin's rural electrification program to restore the Soviet economy, to the New Deal hydropower projects in the United States, and the colonial and postcolonial electrifications of Delhi and South Africa's townships, electricity has historically provided a metaphor for everything modern (Ferguson, 1999). Power grids are effectively an intrinsic part to the modernist quest to rationalize space and consolidate state power both in 'western' metropolis and its colonies overseas—where these infrastructures also contributed to exploit the indigenous' economic resources. Indeed, whereas in western societies electricity networks (like water, sewage, or telecommunication) are typically remarked upon only when they fail to work properly. In the colonial and nominally postcolonial world, these infrastructures have been patently visible from the outset and foregrounded in the everyday life of the population. For the development of large technological networks in these contexts often generate uneven spatial and socio-technical

arrangements of subordination and control (Kooy and Bakker, 2008; Gandy, 2004). As such, electricity grids, like other infrastructures, provide the material and symbolic sinews that shape relations of power and the fragmentation of populations in well networked enclaves and poorly served areas. Today, as capital is literally fixed and embedded within and between the fabric of modern life, electricity networks represent "long-term accumulations of finance, technology, know-how, and organizational and geopolitical power" (Graham and Marvin, 2001:12). At the same time, these networks are a material site of political struggle and contestation, as illustrated by the widespread resistance to attempts at the privatization and commodification of electricity globally (Bond and McInnes, 2007; McDonald, 2012).

Recent research has begun to focus on infrastructure networks from a variety of disciplinary perspectives ranging from social studies of technology, urban studies or political ecology to critical political economy, political science and development studies. This scholarship addresses the problem of traditional accounts of infrastructure that have too often considered these networks as objects full of technical and economic value, but empty of socio-political meaning. This includes, for instance, work on the histories of 'social construction' and socio-political transformations wrought by infrastructure networks (Melosi, 2000); how infrastructure shape and is shaped by the condition of 'modernity' (Kaika, 2004); how these networked technologies express and are constituted by relations of social power (Swyngedouw, 2004); the splintering and uneven nature of these networks (Graham and Marvin, 2001); the privatization of infrastructures and the commodification of essential services (McDonald and Ruiters, 2005); or the role of development in rendering problems of infrastructure inequality into technocratic (and thus de-politicized) interventions amenable to programs of improvement (Li, 2007). This work opens up the 'black box' of networked infrastructure and enables us to explore the inherently political nature and implications of infrastructure development and the ways in which infrastructures, spaces and populations are produced and transformed together (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008).

Whereas in these accounts water and sanitation networks often feature as the objects through which these relations are unraveled, electrification and the politics of electric grids have been hitherto undertheorized and empirically understudied. This is surprising considering the influence on these accounts of Thomas Hughes's seminal work on the sociopolitical histories of electrification in western societies (see Hughes 1983; 1987). At the same time, while attention to techno-political themes is gaining ground in the global south, studies on the political role of technology in the Middle East remain largely absent,

the work of Timothy Mitchell on colonization, techno-politics, and political economy in Egypt, and on geographies of oil and democracy in Iraq, being influential exceptions[54] (1991; 2002; 2011). Moreover, there is a notable absence of studies on electrification in settler colonial contexts. This is also striking considering that infrastructure, and the connections and disconnections that are mediated through these networks become –if anything—even more salient in the colonial world (Harris, 2004). An analytical focus on how these 'large technical systems' are constructed and governed in Palestine offers thus a powerful illustration of how electrification drives and connects to current debates on settler colonialism, statecraft and capitalist uneven development.

During the last decade a number of historians have sought to write a 'comprehensive' Palestinian history and history of Palestine (see Khalidi 1997; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003; Pappé 2004). Although this work has become essential for developing geographies of Palestine, the vital role that space plays in co-constituting the lives of Palestinians is mostly scripted as a derivative of history (Harker, 2010). In these accounts, infrastructures, like space, are largely marginal and feature as passive residues of different historical, political, and socio-economic processes. In fact, this work seems to have overlooked how infrastructure, and particularly electricity, has been, since the early days of the British Mandate, a crucial site of contestation and a key factor in determining the history of the region (see Jean Smith, 1993). In contrast, proliferating, if somewhat disparate, literature on the occupied territories –West Bank and Gaza Strip— has emphasized the vital role that networked infrastructures play in shaping Palestinian space. This work is largely concerned with geopolitics, and making visible the relationship between infrastructure and state power articulated at the scale of the nation-state. Moreover, these networks have been described as a source of connection, but also as a means of disconnection, discrimination and control (Halper, 2000; Gordon, 2008; Weizman, 2007). At the same time, some authors have noted how these infrastructures have been reconceptualized and redesigned from their original and purely utilitarian function into the political and symbolic tools of an ethno-national project (Azaryahu, 2001; Pullan et al, 2007).

Although this work is important in its own right, these contributions tend to treat infrastructure as closed, static and materially constant 'artifacts' on which to hang arguments and claims to illustrate other discourses and processes. This presents three major limitations to the broader study of infrastructure and electrification in the Palestinian context. First, the macro-level perspective and the focus on politics and violence inherent in these geopolitical debates tend to neglect the ways

[54] See also Parker, 2009 and Alahmad, 2013.

in which these networks are materially and symbolically constructed. This means, in turn, that they fail to recognize and interrogate the ways in which infrastructures, space and population are mutually constructed and how these broader networks are involved in sustaining highly contested, complex and contingent geographies of power. Second, to script infrastructure networks exclusively through the lens of the occupation framework, as most of these studies do, is to fail to acknowledge the ways in which these socio-technical assemblages are constituted within a broader array of settler colonial geographies. In other words, an exclusive and ahistorical focus on the development of these networks in the West Bank and Gaza not only fails to reflect prior patterns and polices of Israeli statecraft but also overlooks the ways in which infrastructure assemblages exceed rigid spatial and temporal boundaries, both literally and conceptually. Third, the political economy aspects of infrastructures in these accounts are recurrently neglected. As such, these studies often take for granted the interrelated colonial and capitalist forces that shape the development of these networks. In sum, these studies cannot in and on themselves help us to understand how the development and governance of infrastructure defines the broader history of the region, and the ways these networks come to matter not only spatially and politically, but also socially and economically. By focusing on electrification, this paper hopes thus to contribute to recent work on Palestine studies that is beginning to take seriously the study of infrastructure networks[55].

Through a historically grounded study of the development and governance of electrification in the Palestinian context, this paper attempts to overcome the aforementioned limitations and in doing so, as Robbins suggests, make infrastructures visible to show how the landscape is the result of present as well as past projects and struggles (2007). As such, this paper takes electricity networks not as material artifacts that are the passive foundation on which politics takes place, but rather as a vehicle through which political and economic relations are constituted. By studying the actors, debates and disputes over production, control, regulation and access to electricity, this paper shows how electrification is differently invested with meaning and significance in different configurations of power and authority through the contemporary history of Palestine. In this way, as I suggest in this paper, power grids become the material evidence of how the colonial legacy of dependency and subordination embedded in these infrastructures is reproduced and normalized through process and rituals of neoliberal development in the post-Oslo era. Electrification

[55] See for instances the work on telecommnications by Aouragh (2011), Tawil-Souri (2012) and Junka-Aikio (2012); on water by Zeitoun (2008) and Signoles (2010); sanitation by Stamatopoulou-Robbins (2013) or more recently on electricity by Shamir (2013).

appears thus as an outcome and a means of Israeli settler colonialism, and as a vehicle for introducing and experimenting with neoliberal forms of capitalism. Engaging with the political history and geography of the configurations of power grids provides thus an alternative reading of Palestine whereby electricity grids play a central role in directing, organizing and shaping the socio-economic, political and spatial colonial conditions of this place.

GROUNDING THE CONDITION OF DEPENDENCY-CUM-DISPOSSESION

When Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, it expulsed twenty-five percent of the population, seized the native's land and resources, and took control over all aspects of Palestinian life. In less than a decade, the occupation policies, which were economic in form but political in motivation, dismantled the Palestinian economy turning the territories into a captive consumer market and a cheap and highly mobile labor pool. As Adam Hanieh recently put it, the territories became "an incorporated, dependent, and subordinated adjunct of Israeli capitalism" (2013a:100). Israel's settler colonial impetus however was not economic exploitation, which did happen, but rather to ensuring economic and territorial domination to make Palestinians fully dependent on Israel and to facilitate Jewish settlement throughout the territories (Farsakh, 2008:2). In other words, the Zionist state sought to primarily "acquire the land, not the economic potential contained within it" (Roy, 1995:140). This move to disarticulate the Palestinian economy and integrate its territories (without the people) into the body of Israel has been described by Sara Roy as de-development; a process characterized by a systematic effort to control the Palestinian market and trade, the proletarianization of much of its population, and the cooptation and alignment of traditional elites with settler's interests (1995).

Equally important to this process was the dispossession and regulation of vital Palestinian resources such as electricity and water and its related infrastructure. By controlling access to these and other factors of social reproduction, Israel effectively limited Palestinian development in ways that consolidated a structural relation of dependency. Indeed, one relevant and often neglected illustration of this structural dependency is the electrification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Immediately after the occupation, Israel began a deliberate and gradual process to dismantle the existing Palestinian electricity generation capacity. This process, as we shall see, went hand in hand with the physical integration of Palestinian villages and towns into the Israeli national grid. Electricity was by no means an exception and projects considered to strengthen the native productive base or compete with Israeli economic interests, such as agriculture, water storage or construction, were routinely

rejected (Nassar and Heacock, 1990). The control of electricity and other infrastructure was thus essential to ground enduring conditions of dependency-cum-dispossession, yet also vital in enabling the progressive expansion of outposts, settlements and military bases across the territories. For these power grids, like water and telecommunication networks, have long been "the elixir of life for the settlements, the secret of their power" (Zertal and Eldar, 2009:XV).

Electric power and British concessions

To understand how these conditions came about, it is necessary to underline that the history of electrification in Palestine is integral to the larger Zionist settler colonial project. Electricity, like water (Alatout, 2009; Da'Na, 2013) or roads (Jabary Salamanca, 2014), is vested with ideological, political and economic imports critical to the historical and contemporary formation of Zionism in Palestine. Questions around electricity thus do not emerge after 1967; they are rooted in the evolution of political, economic and social relations formalized during the British Mandate in Palestine (1920-1948). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the period pre-dating 1967, it is worth mentioning that the British government granted "representatives of Jewish 'national capital' monopolistic concessions to exploit natural resources and operate public services and utilities in Palestine" (Smith, 1993:117). This included among others the exploitation of hydro-electricity in the Jordan River and the vital resources of the Dead Sea. The British Mandate, which consistently accorded preferential treatment to the Zionist movement, approved these concessions under the assumption that Zionist capital would be "able to promote development schemes that would placate Arab opposition and thereby justify British policy" (Smith, 1993:118). The electricity concession however was not significant in economic terms but rather for its political and symbolic value.

Indeed, no single project represents most vividly the modernization and development of Zionism in Palestine during the 1920s than the Rutenberg electricity concession. Pinhas Rutenberg, a Russian Jew and a committed Zionist, believed, like Theodor Herzl before him (Herzl, 1904), in the near-magical abilities and central importance of electricity to transform Palestine and accomplishing the Zionist settler mission. The electrical concession gave Rutenberg monopolistic rights over the supply of electric power in Trans-Jordan and throughout Palestine, with the exception of the Jerusalem district concession. Despite his attempts at silencing and bribing Arabs (Khalidi, 2007; Cohen, 2008), these developments did not go unnoticed among a native population that fully understood the political significance of this development. Palestinians unsuccessfully protested the electricity concession during the 1920s

with slogans such as “In Rutenberg’ scheme is our slavery” and “the foundation of the [Jewish] national home” or “the poor light of the lamps with glory and freedom is better than electric light with oppression and degradation” (Smith, 1993:122). Ultimately, the electricity concession was crucial in paving the way for the Zionist movement to acquire an overwhelming degree of control over the economic future of Palestine, while simultaneously granting settlers the ability to obstruct any Arab development project requiring electricity, such as agriculture and industry.

Colonizing Palestine on the grid: one municipality at a time

At the time of the Israeli conquest in 1967, and despite decades of infrastructure neglect by the previous Jordanian and Egyptian administrations (1948-1967) in the West Bank and the Gaza strip respectively (Abed, 1988), Palestinians generated and distributed electric power throughout the territories. Regional and local utility suppliers, such as the Jerusalem electricity company, with a concession for the entire Jerusalem district, and the Hebron, Nablus and Gaza utilities, supplied their respective cities and surrounding communities via diesel units. There were as well other smaller suppliers like village councils, a number of community-based rural electrification committees and cooperatives with small fuel-run generators (CEP, 1993). Whereas in the West Bank more than 80 per cent of the houses in urban areas had uniform electricity services, and around 23 per cent of rural areas had electricity for few hours a day, mostly for illumination purposes; in Gaza, less than 10 per cent of the households in the strip had some kind of electricity services for domestic and street lighting (UNCTAD, 1994). This limited but self-sufficient and growing electricscape changed dramatically soon after the colonial invasion.

One of the first measures adopted by the Israeli government was the enforcement of Military Order 159 in November 1st 1967. The order was meant to take control of and regulate Palestinian electricity generation and supply by vesting all power related to the sector with the military authorities (COHRE, 2005). From this moment on, all activities related to electricity required prior approval from Israeli officers, including upgrading and expanding the existing generation, transmission and distribution facilities and networks or the construction of new ones. This translated into frequent restrictions on the existing Palestinian producers and distributors, including interrupting fuel supplies –also under Israeli control— disrupting proper operation and maintenance of the power stations, and withholding permits for purchasing new equipment or the necessary spare parts required for upgrading and maintaining existing infrastructure (UNCTAD, 1994). Throughout the years these and other Kafkaesque restrictions stroke a hard blow to the

entire energy sector and particularly to electricity. Prevented from expanding or even sustaining their existing generation capacity, confronted to increasing demand and raising production costs, and left without viable alternatives, Palestinian utilities and other smaller suppliers were gradually forced to shut down its generating plants. The outcome of this deliberate and suffocating policy was the hooking-up of all suppliers to the Israeli Electricity Corporation grid, a state run utility inheritor of the Rutenberg's Palestine Electric Company.

This forced infrastructural linkage, which was contested by Palestinians who sought to protect their already fragile economy, happened progressively, one municipality at a time. Few months after the 1967 occupation Gaza City was connected to the Israeli grid followed by the rest of municipalities in the Strip. Evoking protests from the British Mandate period, local mayors in Gaza challenged the linkage as a move that changed the status quo and "as the thin end of the wedge of Israeli annexation" (Roy, 1985:148). Despite resistance, Moshe Dayan, Defense Minister at the time and leading ideologue of the 'enlightened' occupation strategy, justified the decision on security grounds, to have better lighting for streets, highways and installations, and as a means to provide much needed and cheaper electricity to underserved areas (JTA, 1969). After the connection of the Gaza Strip, throughout the 1970s and 80s, suppliers from the West Bank such as Qalqilya, Hebron, Tulkarem, Jenin, and Jerusalem followed suit. Newspaper headlines regularly reported about the progressive seizure of Palestinian power: "Arab electric company told to prepare for take over" (Jerusalem Post, 1980), "Lights out on Hebron municipality" (Al-Fajr, 1982), "Israel tightens grip on Nablus electric" (Al Fajr, 1985a), and "Jenin Electricity falls under Israeli control" (Al Fajr, 1985b). One after another, independent utilities, some with more than three decades of history, saw the shutdown of their power plants as they were connected into a colonial grid that transformed them into intermediary agents that collected the monthly bill payments and transferred the money to the Israeli Electricity Corporation (IEC).

The most notorious and contested case of this policy was the linkage of the Jerusalem District Electric Company (JDEC). Dating back to the days of the Ottoman Empire, this company was the largest utility in the territories and the only Arab utility in Palestine with a concession to produce and supply electricity for an area covering the region of Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. More significantly, "this was the only important instance [the other being Hebron], in which Jewish customers and zones were dependent on an essential public service originating in the Arab sector" (Romann and Weingrod in Dumper 1993:153). Indeed, for twenty years, from 1967 until 1987, the company provided electricity for expanding colonial settlements and military

bases in the Israeli annexed areas of Jerusalem that fell within its concession region. This situation was not without controversy. After the occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, the company had to decide between lighting the settlements, which was tantamount to recognizing them as legitimate, or not to provide electricity, which meant the IEC would, thus granting Israel sovereignty over those areas (Abu Swei and Rouhana, 1985). In the end, the company decided to abide by the principle that its concession was indivisible. For the JDEC, keeping the concession intact and upholding some sort of independence was of great political significance to preserve the Arab character of the Palestinian capital. This became however a great challenge and a costly one at that. To be able to handle provision for the rapidly residential and industrial colonial settlements spreading in the area,[56] as well as covering the growing Palestinian demand, the company connected to the IEC grid in 1979 under harsh economic conditions. The company was forced to sell electricity for settlements at the same subsidized prices the IEC sold to Israeli consumers, even though the IEC would only sell bulk electricity to JDEC at inflated rates (Dumper, 1993). Subjected to a myriad of bureaucratic, legal and economic restrictions, and with no funding to invest in its decrepit and overloaded infrastructure, the company was eventually forced to stop electric generation in 1988.

These cumulative struggles gradually gave visibility to the political nature of electrification in ways that challenged Israel's approach of a settler colonial occupation that, as Dayan would have it, was to be felt but not seen. Electrification constituted thus a significant and symbolic site of struggle that brought a myriad of actors and interests together, from inside and outside Palestine. In effect, electrification was of such political, economic and ideological import that even the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), whose leadership was based in the diaspora at the time, sought to contest and influence its direction on the territories. Not only did the PLO waged a protracted struggle to support the Jerusalem electricity company in its attempt to preserve the concession and its generating capacity power, it also channeled money to other municipalities, via the 'Jordanian–Palestinian Joint Committee', to disrupt the Israeli expansion of utility networks and basic services to the Palestinian population (Sayigh, 1997). As Sayigh argues, for the PLO the provision of electricity and other infrastructure was a way to support indigenous social reproduction, prevent out-migration from the territories, and strengthen the collective national consciousness (1997). Yet it was also a way to enable conduits of political influence at a time where the organization was increasingly being isolated from ongoing developments inside Palestine. The PLO sought thus to respond to the ways electricity and other essential services were used by Israel as part

[56] Israeli Jews constituted about 40 percent of JDEC's consumers, they consumed 60 percent of the company's electricity production.

of its political calculations. That is, to ground conditions of dependency and control, but also as a showcase of their 'enlighten' occupation model and to buy itself support from the local population, especially in rural areas. For electricity, as well as other development projects, were deliberately used by the settler state to reward collaborators –by granting licenses to generators, connect houses and villages, or to upgrade and maintain the network— while punishing those who challenged the occupation policies by denying access to these vital infrastructures (see Abdeen and Shaqaa, 1978; Litani, 1982; Natshe and Egan, 1984).

The resistance to and consolidation of the Zionist electricity regime was thus played out via institutional and bureaucratic mechanisms but also through the very materiality of power infrastructure: from generators and the extension of wires, to the construction of electric poles and the configuration of the grid itself. Once in place, these sociotechnical networks created the foundations of an enduring dependency as well as the possibilities to segregate, control and suppress the Palestinian population. Not only were these networks used to fully integrate the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into the Israeli national carrier, the linkage was done in ways that functionally segregated these networks along ethnic lines, into separate Jewish and Palestinian sub-systems (CEP, 1993). The configuration and nature of these infrastructures is revealing for it shows how the violence of settler colonialism was effectively built into them. Successive Israeli governments deliberately tailored an incoherent, undersized, and obsolete radial system of electricity clusters running on low voltage power lines (Abualkhair, 2007). This fragmented configuration, which significantly differed from the standards applied within Israel, hindered transmission of electricity across the territories and thus disabled the possibility to compensate electricity looses across the network, which comprised an staggering 35 per cent of the operation cost (Abualkhair, 2007). Moreover, electricity substations, meters and power lines –some of which were given prophet names such as Benjamin and Rachel— gave priority to Jewish colonies and military bases, and were placed out of Palestinian reach; inside core settlements in the West Bank like Ariel or Kiryat Arba, and outside the boundaries of the Gaza Strip (see Figure 11 and Figure 12).

Figure 11: JDEC Concession area and network, 1992 (Source: CEP)

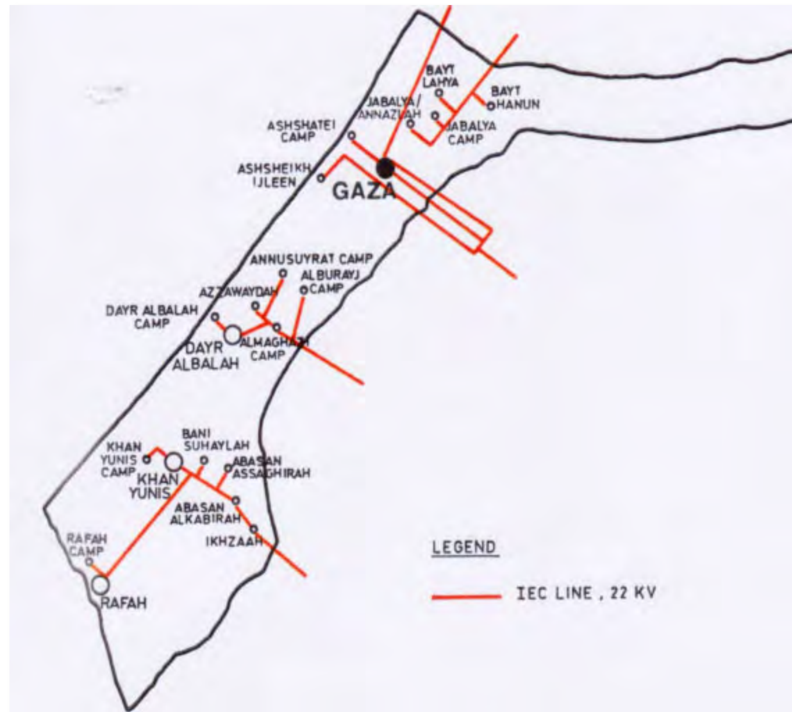

Figure 12: Transmission lines in the Gaza Region (1992) (Source: CEP)

Strategically grounded throughout the territory, every water pipe and electricity pylon became a vital weapon against the Palestinians. For once Palestinian municipalities where hooked-up to the grid, Israel could decide the amount of electricity that may be purchased as well as

cut off the flow with the flick of a switch, as it has consistently done for decades as a measure of collective punishment (Hiltermann, 1993; Jabary Salamanca, 2011).

The obduracy of dependency

The ideological, political and economic imperatives of Zionism ended up producing nevertheless a seemingly contradictory policy whereby on the one hand the settler state connected and supplied electricity to large parts of the urban population while, on the other, it denied Palestinians of its generation capacity letting numerous rural communities disconnected. This dual process resulted is what Meron Benvenisti describes as ‘individual prosperity and communal stagnation’: an outcome that “came to represent what was maximally allowable within the existing constraints as well as what was minimally desirable” (Roy, 1987). Electrification was thus, like other de-development policies, defined by “the systematic application of measures that encouraged stability in the short term but promoted disintegration in the long term” (Idem). Measures that were designed “not only to appease and then fragmented Palestinian society, but to render it unviable” (Idem). Thus, Israel enabled the possibility of native electrification so long as it did not exceed the established boundaries. Yet when the regime felt threaten it systematically disrupted and even destroyed the development of these networks.

In effect, despite the violence embedded into and transmitted though processes of electrification in the Palestinian territories, by the early 1990s, around 95 per cent of the urban population enjoyed continuous electricity supply while total consumption per capita increased from 33 kilowatt hours in 1967 to 462 in the West Bank, and around 356 in the Gaza Strip (UNCTAD, 1994). Likewise, prices for most Palestinian municipalities became cheaper than those provided by the remaining Palestinian producers.[57] These are precisely the sorts of indicators often used by Israeli advocates and decision makers to maintain the illusion about the benign nature of occupation and its significant contribution to Palestinian development (e.g. Gazit, 2003). Yet, these figures obscure the intricacies and crude reality behind a long history of colonial electrification. Indeed, after more than two decades of Israeli rule, 95 per cent of the total Palestinian supply of electricity was purchased from the and virtually no funds were spent on electricity generation projects (UNCTAD, 1994). Furthermore, “about 50 per cent of the rural population in the West Bank had no regular electricity supply or none at all”, and “only around 10 per cent of the distributed electricity was

[57] The Nablus utility is a case in point. After a long struggle to maintain its generation capacity it ended up purchasing 65 per cent of its requirements from IEC at 0.060 Jordanian dinars per kilowatt-hour while producing 35 per cent at 0.105 (UNCTAD, 1994)

absorbed by industry and agriculture, while the rest was consumed mainly for household purposes." (UNCTAD, 1994).[58] These figures reveal thus a different picture from the one portrayed by the colonial authorities and are testimony to the condition of Palestinian dependency and the absolute lack of Palestinian development two decades after military occupation.

OSLO'S NEOLIBERAL TURN, ELECTRICITY REFORM AND THE COMMODIFICATION AND REPRODUCTION OF DEPENDENCY

Whereas, as we have seen, electrification serves to advance the imperatives of settler colonialism in Palestine, after the 1993 Oslo accords it became as well a vital site to experiment with and introduce neoliberal policies in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In effect, as part of the 'peace' process and in the context of global liberalization that characterized the 1990s, electricity was gradually privatized with negligible consideration to the entrenched inequalities defining these colonial networks in the occupied territories. This process was driven by the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) which, together with international development agencies, financial institutions and Palestinian and foreign capitalists, began shaping the institutional and economic foundations of the Palestinian pseudo-state. In what follows we turn our attention to the interwoven colonial and capitalist logics of subordination that structured electrification in the aftermath of Oslo. In doing so we underline the ways dependency relations embedded in electricity infrastructure, far from being dismantled, have been largely incorporated into and normalized through neoliberal rituals of electricity reform. And most importantly, how this reconfiguration is undermining municipal and individual mechanisms to cope with increasing economic hardships, let alone the relentless advance of setter colonialism.

Crafting Oslo

The logic, contradictions, and consequences of electricity reform need to be understood in relation to the Oslo accords. This agreement signed between Israel and the raised unrealistic expectations about the end of military occupation and Palestinian liberation. The allure and optimism that surrounded the accords was such that in the early 1990s, Palestinian business leaders and officials, including the late Yasser Arafat, proclaimed that the future Palestinian state would become the Singapore of the Middle East (Parsons, 2005). This treaty, however, constituted a scaffold for the reproduction of socio-economic

[58] Incidentally, this dual pattern outlined the cartography of separation that defined the colonial spatialities of the 1994 Oslo accords. That is, a territory fragmented into a series of separated enclaves whereby urban areas became under 'control' of Palestinians while most rural areas become the colonial frontier for Israeli settlement expansion.

inequalities and dependency, the denial of Palestinian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the outright rejection of self-determination (see Usher, 1999; Massad, 2006; Said, 2007). In fact, contrary to what it is often assumed, the Oslo accords were an instrument designed to effectively consolidate and deepen the structures of occupation laid down by Israeli colonialism in the preceding decades (Hanieh, 2013b). In the case of electricity, this was clearly reflected on the ways the agreements confirmed and codified prior mechanisms of control and limitations to the native's infrastructure development.[59] As such, even though the accords stipulated that Palestinians could develop the necessary institutions to govern their own energy sector. The annexed protocol on economic cooperation determined that any project concerning electricity –as well as water, telecommunication, transportation, finance and trade— would be subjected to the mutual approval of Israelis and Palestinians. In practice, as we shall see, this arrangement meant the systematic refusal and unjustified delay of most electricity and other infrastructural projects and was thus tantamount to the continuous subordination of Palestinian development to Israeli control.

If politically, through the accords, Zionism achieved the consolidation and long sought legitimation of military occupation in the territories. Economically, the entire Oslo project was founded upon neoliberal policies, and the free market orthodoxy of the 'Washington Consensus' (Khalidi and Samour, 2011). Neoliberalism was a necessary instrument for "the political subordination and dependency that characterizes Palestinian class and state formation in the area" (Hanieh, 2013a:97). Yet, it was also a "central corollary to the political direction promoted by the Israeli government, the PA, and their US and European Union supporters" (Hanieh, 2008). Thus while 'western' donors, especially the US, enforced neoliberal reforms through financial institutions such as the World Bank –with its 'tight' aid money, standard prescriptions, and development experts. The PA, a captive institution run by a cooperative and dependent class of returnees and their local allies, facilitated and enacted these policies at the same time that it attempted to overlook Palestinian interests and advise the local and diaspora Palestinian bourgeoisie on potential investments (Parsons, 2005). This relation however was not exclusively one of subordination but also of mutual interest. For, with Oslo, the state building agenda and class interests of the leadership and Palestinian 'patriotic capital' became more clearly aligned with regional (including Israel) and global circuits of capital

[59] See electricity regulations in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, (http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/oslo_eng.htm) and in the Annex III: Protocol Concerning Civil Affairs (http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/heskemb4_eng.htm)

accumulation, than with the historical struggle for Palestinian liberation and self-determination (Samara, 2001). The reform of the dilapidated Palestinian electricity infrastructure is reflective of how, under this arrangement, Oslo's neoliberal turn was set in motion in ways that gradually normalized and commodify existing relations of dependency and subordination.

Electricity reform under protracted settler colonialism and global liberalization

From the outset, the PA and its benefactors considered electricity and other essential infrastructures critical to laying the foundations that would determine development prospects in the occupied territories (World Bank, 1993). The priority given to these networks is no surprise, for infrastructures and the powerful sense of development that they promise are seen to harbinger broader expectations of state formation and economic growth, as well as an invaluable tool to provide tangible benefits to the population and commensurate visibility for donors (Le More, 2008). Donor support for electrification, however, was conditioned to applying the standard prescriptions of the time. Indeed, during the 1990s, international financial institutions led by the World Bank adopted liberalization as prerequisite to lending for electricity development. These were the days of "the emergence of aggressive new commercial interests (such as Enron) in the traditionally staid public utility field, strong-armed persuasion by the home governments of those commercial interests and unprecedented international capital flows" (Dubash and Williams, 2006:159). In practice this translated into a technocratic and uniform model known, in technical parlance, as 'unbundling'. That is, the segmentation of the electricity sector into generation, transmission and distribution, to open it to different forms of privatization. Unbundling essentially assumes that a regulated market led by private actors and open to competition offers more efficiency and lower prices than a public monopoly (Graham and Marvin, 2004). The assumption is that a public owned electricity system is invariably and "variously debt-ridden, insolvent, a drain on state finances, inefficient, polluting, corrupt, or a tool of political patronage" (Dubash and Williams, 2006:157). In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, like in other cases across the globe, this model was implemented with no consideration to context specificities and as one-size-fits-all solution to problems saturating an electricity industry under military occupation.

The liberalization of electricity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was codified in the Letter of Sector Policy of 1997, the cornerstone of the Palestinian electricity reform. Whereas the main stated goal was "to providing the citizens of Palestine with reliable electricity supplies, … at a price that is affordable and that permits the efficient long term

development of the sector and the economy as a whole." The driving rational was to "encouraging maximum private sector participation … particularly in generation and distribution, thus minimizing the need for government financial support"[60]. To unleash the potential of the private sector in a sound, autonomous and efficient manner this document proposed a series of critical measures that followed to the letter earlier recommendations of the World Bank (World Bank, 1993). These included among others the privatization of power generation to increase system capacity and reduce supply dependency on Israel; the gradual disengagement of Palestinian municipalities from existing utilities for its transformation into commercially oriented companies that could be partially or totally privatize in the future; and the creation of a legal framework to clearly divide electricity policy-making, ownership and regulation. The shift brought about the liberalization of the sector turned electricity into a major test and benchmark for introducing free market principles, privatization, fiscal discipline, and commercially oriented services. Yet, it also subordinated reform to an econometric approach without recourse to politics that naturalizes dependency and undermines possibilities for social reproduction. [61] The limits, contradictions and failure of this narrowly technocratic approach can be better observed in the privatization of power production and distribution.

The Gaza Power Plant fiasco

The main achievement and yet biggest fiasco of the first decade of electricity reform was the establishment of the Gaza power plant. This private led initiative, the largest after Oslo, brought together the class interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie and foreign corporate capital with the neoliberal agenda of Palestinian officialdom and it's supporting donors. Initiated in 1999, the plant was jump-started by the Palestinian Electric Company (PEC), a conglomerate equally divided between the Palestinian owned and Greek based Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC), local Palestinian commercial and institutional investors, and the North American giant Enron. The construction of the $110 million power plant was subcontracted by PEC to a joint European venture, including French engineering firm Alstom and the Swiss-Swedish group Asea Brown Boveri[62]. To facilitate this venture, the WB provided a $15 million loan to PEC, and the U.S. government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation granted a $22.5 million risk insurance (Vallette and Wysham, 2002). Although the project was delayed for several months

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[60] http://pea-pal.tripod.com/transmission/letter_of_sector_policy.htm

[61] Remarkably, whereas privatization has gradually taken root in the occupied territories, in Israel, despite numerous attempts for liberalization, electricity remains a public monopoly run by the state through the IEC.

[62] http://www.europolitics.info/abb-alstom-power-wins-euro-110-million-palestine-deal-artr150144-5.html

due to the outbreak of the second Intifada, in the early 2000s, and the infamous bankruptcy of Enron, which was replaced by Morganti, an American group controlled by CCC. In March 2004 the combined fuel-gas power plant was inaugurated and began its operations. It did not take long however before it became clear how this major privatization exercise failed to deliver on the stated aims of the Letter of Sector Policy, namely minimizing governmental financial support, providing affordable prices, and increasing Palestinian energetic independence from Israel.

In the first place, the power plant became a heavy financial burden for the PA due a ludicrous 'capacity payment' contract signed between the Palestinian Energy Authority (PEA) and PEC. This twenty-year Power Purchase Agreement obliges the PA to pay $2.5 million per month to the Gaza Power Generating Company,[63] in exchange for producing 140 megawatts. These monies are disbursed irrespectively of whether the plant actually produces the contracted power load, which it has never been able to do. Hence the company generates a regular 10% profit even in instances whereby the plant ceases working for large periods of time, as it happened when it was party destroyed by the Israeli army in 2006, or during fuel shortages due to the criminal Israeli siege of Gaza (PEC, 2006, 2012)[64]. As such, since 2004 alone, the company has received $240 millions in concept of 'capacity payment', enough money by now for the PA to buy the company back (Ferrara and Rabinowitz, 2013). Secondly, the contract stipulates that the PA, on behalf of the PEA, shall supply fuel to the plant at no cost to the investors of the PEC (World Bank, 2007). Thus the PA is obliged to arrange and purchase the gasoil from Israel at market prices, independently of price variation.[65] Another financial burden covered by the PA though donor money that flows directly into the pockets of the Israeli Dor Olon fuel company, the sole fuel provider to the occupied territories. This means not only that Palestinian power generation remains fully dependent on the Israeli provision of fuel but also on donor money for covering the running costs of the power plant. Finally, the promise of lower electricity production rates as a result of privatization never materialized. Today, whereas Israel and Egypt power plants sell at NIS 0.56 and 0.32 kWh respectively, PEC offers a significantly higher price of NIS 2.3 KWh that is in turn subsidize by the PA (Ferrara and Rabinowitz, 2013).[66] Ultimately, the

[63] The GPGP is a subsidiary company fully owned by CCC created to operate the Gaza Power plant.

[64] http://www.haaretz.com/news/gaza-s-hobbled-power-plant-makes-millions-despite-turmoil-1.274689

[65] For a detailed account on the ways this fuel monopoly works see Ferrara and Rabinowitz, 2013 - https://irpi.eu/italiano-il-gas-di-gaza-e-gli-sprechi-dellunione-europea/ See also article by Omar Shaban http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/gaza-electricity-crisis-sewage-power-israel-egypt.html

[66] The reason for this disparity is mostly related to two factors. On the one hand, the high technical looses resulting from a decrepit grid that was not properly upgraded and which was a

Gaza power plant rather than a symbol of Palestinian energy independence, as it was initially considered, become a signifier of the contradictions and failure of electricity privatization under prolonged occupation.[67]

'Time for municipalities to get out of the electricity business'

If the privatization of production did little to reverse relations of dependency or facilitating economic growth, the reform of electricity distribution has not done better. Indeed, simultaneously to the privatization of power generation the PA began the corporatization of electricity distribution. This process virtually coincided with the outbreak of the second Intifada and a brutal Israeli repression campaign that caused "one of the worst recessions in modern history": an economic devastation that drove nearly half of the population below the poverty line leaving 40 percent unemployed (World Bank, 2004:1). In spite of this, corporatization is being gradually enforced according to the aims of the Letter of Sector policy. That is, to redress fragmentation and inefficiency by amalgamating municipal electricity departments into new commercially oriented utilities to eventually hand them over to private actors (PEA, 1997). In about a decade, from 1998 to 2010, one new power distribution company was established in Gaza and three others throughout the West Bank.[68] The premise was that corporate utilities would introduce market mechanisms to enable economies of scale through the regionalization of service provision; the improvement of service quality by socializing the costs of running, maintaining and upgrading the grid; assuring cost-recovery through profit maximization; and, ultimately, opening up distribution to private capital as a remedy to municipal management problems (World Bank 1993; 2007). This form of neoliberal governance, which prioritizes efficiency objectives over equity concerns, not only lead to an increasing commodification of electricity in a context of steadily economic deterioration and replete with inequalities. It also subsumed existing relations of subordination to the logic of the market in ways that reduced political problems to a simple cost-benefit analysis.

The corporatization of electricity distribution proceeded from the outset without addressing the colonial legacy of electrification or the structural limitations built into the Oslo agreements. In many ways, there was a

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secondary priority to the privatization of the power plant. And, on the other, the enormous costs of using fuel rather than gas to run the power plant as initially planned.

[67] Gaza needs 350- 450 megawatts per year. It gets about 120 megawatts from Israel, and 20 megawatts from Egypt. Gaza's own power station is supposed to provide 140 megawatts, but only manages to produce 80 megawatts per year. Most Gazans have gotten used to electricity blackouts of up to 12 hours per day.

[68] The Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) was established in 1998, the Southern Electric Company (SELCO) in 2004, the Hebron Electric Power Company (HEPCO) started operations from 2005, and the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCO) lunched in 2010.

naïve understanding that these and other issues would eventually be resolved via peace negotiations. Yet, twenty years after the 'peace' accords, Israel has the upper hand on key aspects of the Palestinian energy sector and it continues to disrupt electrification in ways that are reminiscent of previous decades. In effect, municipalities and new corporate utilities are systematically subjected to delays on customs clearance for all deliveries, which entail considerable costs to the suppliers due to the high Israeli charges for storage and demurrage. The Israeli authorities deny and delay permits –sometimes for months and even years—for connecting to the Israeli grid or upgrading an obsolete and fragmented network that bears disproportional and costly technical looses. Moreover, the Israeli army regularly and deliberately damages electrical installations while its closure policy prevents the free mobility of construction staff and the distribution of materials (NORAD, 2004). This is compounded by the fact that Israeli Electricity Corporation continuous to limit electricity supplies for Palestinians, and refuses to approve a vital purchase agreement for favorable bulk supply tariffs rather than charges on an ad hoc basis.[69] Furthermore, the lack of Palestinian control over electricity is so staggering that the government doesn't even have access to municipal or regional meters and are thus unable to control or measure IEC electricity charges, which often exceed the amounts consumed and impede proper planning.[70] As such, with no production capacity, no control over the Israeli cost of electricity, and still wired to the Israeli national grid, new regional utilities can only become a replacement for municipalities in their traditional role as intermediary agents to collect and transfer bill payments to the IEC.

At the local level, corporatization has introduced a new institutional setting that upsets the traditional configuration of service distribution and financially weakens municipalities, especially small ones. The establishment of corporate utilities effectively means taking retail power supply away from Palestinian municipalities and local councils, which since the 1967 occupation emerged as the main public bodies responsible for providing essential services. This shift is significant for many municipalities heavily rely on electricity as its main source for survival–in some cases 60 percent of the total municipal income— to finance their non-revenue-earning services (Garzón, 2008). In exchange for transferring their electricity assets and business to the new distribution companies, municipalities were offered proportional ownership to their transferred assets with the understanding that they will receive financial returns from the utilities in the short term, PA and donor support during the transition period, as well as new taxation mechanisms to replace this crucial income.[71] In the face of ongoing

[69] http://www.lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=4799
[70] Interview PEA, Ramallah, 2010
[71] Interview PEA, Ramallah, 2010

colonization and economic stagnation however, the PA has been unable to deliver on the promises of corporatization. As the mayor of the municipality of Salfeet put it, “if the PA does not pay its own electricity bills and can not pay salaries to their own people how will they pay back municipalities for their services?”[72] Thus, with no access to electricity cash flow or alternative financial institutional support and subjected to tighter forms of fiscal discipline, municipalities have been progressively placed in a vulnerable position. As such, many have become increasingly wary about the nature of corporatization, to the extent that some municipalities refuse to join –like the councils in the Salfeet governorate that have stated that will resign if forced to join—, while others are beginning to pull out from regional utilities in order to recover some economic and political autonomy. The recent exit of the Dura municipality from the concession area of the Southern Electric Company (SELCO) is illustrative of the failure and impacts of corporatization.

SELCO, the first regional utility created in the West Bank after Oslo, began operations in 2004 with the support of the World Bank. The company was the result of amalgamating four municipal electricity departments–Dura, Yatta, Dahariah, and Beit Ummar. Like Dura, municipalities joined this partnership expecting advantages such as technical expertise and financial support, an improvement on economic returns, and a new Palestinian power substation to meet their growing electricity demands, which the IEC had consistently denied over the years.[73] Whereas significant financial and technical resources were invested in this utility, corporatization failed to deliver on the rest of its pledges. Today, with roughly 13,000 consumers, the company is unable to generate economies of scale and obtaining sufficient revenues to keep afloat. SELCO is in many ways symptomatic of the experimental nature of a neoliberal scheme that prioritized reform over equity concerns in disregard of the local conditions. In effect, this utility was established in the midst of the intifada in one of the poorest areas of the West Bank and most affected by Israeli occupation. The financial insolvency of SELCO was the product of accumulated loans acquired for its operation and the inability of an impoverish population to pay their electricity bills –cash collection deteriorated from 82% of billings in 2005 to 25% in 2006. This resulted in an accumulated debt with the IEC that further weakened the financial base of the utility, for the IEC charges interest of more than 20% per year on the unpaid balance (World Bank, 2007). In light of this, the municipality of Dura left the utility in 2011, more indebted than when it joined, with no power substation to meet its energy needs, and a population dissatisfied with the increasing prices

[72] Interview, Salfeet, 2010. The mayor also specified that the PA paid only 40% of their bills in 2010, which amounts to 1/4 of the total electricity bill in the municipality.
[73] Interview SELCO, Dura, 2010

of electricity[74]. This case has become an uncomfortable disruption to PA efforts at corporatization for it represents both a failure and a rejection of the corporate model that other Palestinian municipalities are closely looking at. In spite of this, for the PA, corporatization remains central to its efforts at electricity reform. In words of Omar Kittaneh, the Chairman of the Palestinian Energy Authority, "it is time for municipalities to get out of the electricity business."[75]

The corporatization of electricity is also having its toll on the local Palestinian population, particularly among the most vulnerable sectors—refugees and the poor. During the last decade the PA and the World Bank have enforced aggressive forms of cost recovery mechanisms for electricity collection and outstanding debts. This strategy, which is part of the broader electricity reform, gained momentum after the introduction of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) in 2008[76]. Inspired by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, this structural adjustment plan imposed a wide range of austerity measures that have been described as the "harshest attack on any public sector in the Middle East in recent history" (Hanieh, 2008). A crucial aspect of the PRDP is precisely to end with non-payment of electricity, unsatisfactory revenue collection, and the increasing arrears owed to the IEC, which are regularly deducted from the PA's clearance revenues by the Israeli Ministry of Finance (WB, 2007). The later, known as 'net lending', was previously accepted by the PA as a way to mitigate the adverse effects of colonialism and economic depression, especially during the intifada: today it is seen as an unacceptable form of subsidization to customers or municipalities who have failed to pay their utility bills. In order to reduce net lending and increase collection the PA has gradually introduce prepaid electricity meters across the territories.[77] This system not only entails paying in advance for electricity, it has also been adapted to deduct debt from electricity and other municipal services each time a customer buys credit –sometimes up to 50 percent of the purchase (Hamdan, 2012).

A major consequence of this and other corporate mechanisms to enforce payment (like cutting electricity) is that they disable the widespread household strategy to reduce cash expenditures by delaying the payment of bills such as electricity or water. This "constitutes a huge

[74] The municipality of Beit Ummar left in 2005 because of the utility attempts to collect previously unpaid electricity bills among its population.

[75] See communication on West Bank Energy Sector by the US Consulate General in Jerusalem http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10JERUSALEM101_a.html

[76] See the final PRDP plan http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/palestine/shared/documents/PRDPFinal.pdf

[77] 63.7% of households in Palestine used a normal electricity meter and 36.3% of households used a prepaid electricity meter in July 2013 - http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=944&mid=3172&wversion=Staging

burden on poor citizens who can only afford the basic minimum of their needs, as it forces them to cut back on other basic needs to pay for electricity and water." (Hamdan, 2012:7). Although the PA initially proposed a 'lifeline' of electricity to counter the expected economic hardships of this measure and to ensure continued access to utilities and other services for the most vulnerable sectors of the population; thus far these or other measures have not been implemented.[78] Conversely, the new Electricity Law approved by the PA, allows corporate utilities to disconnect power supplies to defaulting citizens. In this way, the poor and vulnerable are increasingly neglected and criminalized through a technocratic discourse that erases the existing colonial conditions and portrays the situation as an endemic culture of non-payment whereby citizens are obstacles for corporatization and a disincentive for private sector participation.

Prepaid meters, like the corporatization and reform of the electricity sector, are thus emblematic of "the contradictory juncture of political liberation and economic liberalization" (Von Schnitzler, 2008). In effect, a population struggling to cope with the ravages of settler colonialism and deep economic stagnation is being asked to pay upfront, in the form of higher tariffs, for the unspecified future benefits of the electricity reform: colonized consumers that do not enjoy the expected benefits of capitalism, but have to endure the discipline of its mechanisms. The irony is that after two decades of inter/national efforts to reform the electricity sector, whereas the necessary market mechanisms for the privatization of electricity are all in place, little has been done to reverse the colonial dependency relations embedded in the electricity system. The PA, the World Bank and other bilateral donors are being more effective however in forcing Palestinians to punctually pay for Israeli controlled essential services, and to consolidating the position of the PA as a tax collector, via new corporate utilities, for Israeli companies.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has addressed fundamental questions around the nature and consequences of electrification in a settler colonial context undergoing profound neoliberal transformations. In bringing together two constitutive and complementary moments in the history of the electrification of Palestine, the paper has traced the political continuities and discontinuities that inform this process in ways that help us to better understand the contemporary moment. This historical approach to the assemblage of electricity networks shows, on the one hand, the myriad of processes and actors that are made invisible throughout its construction and, on the other, how electrification comes to matter

[78] Interview with Khaled Al Barghouti, Deputy General Director to Combat Poverty, Ministry of Social Affairs. Ramallah, December 21st 2012. See also the study by Ayat Hamdan (2012).

politically, economically and socially. In doing so, the central contribution of this paper has been to emphasize the centrality of electrification to the Israel imperatives of settler colonialism, to capitalist modes of production and expansion, and to the reproduction of relations of dependency and inequality.

To understand the significance of electrification in Palestine, however, it is necessary to qualify the examination undertaken above. Three aspects are worth mentioning here. First, a historically grounded approach to Palestine is vital to get to grips with the structural, material and ideological configurations that have shaped and continue to shape this context (Abdo, 2011). This perspective allows us to taking into consideration the simultaneous uneven development geographies resulting from the relentless advance of Zionist colonialism and the consolidation of predatory forms of global capitalism. As such, the critical and historical engagement with the construction and governance of electricity infrastructure presented here shows how electrification is a productive site to illustrate and explore the ways the shared genealogy of settler colonialism and capital forms of neoliberalism literally materialize on the ground. To a large extent this approach helps to disrupt the recurrent exceptionalism that frames Palestine as it reconnects this case to a larger set of settler colonial contexts where infrastructure constitute essential tools of dispossession (Harris, 2004), as well as to the global capitalist forces that shape this region, and of which Palestine is an integral part (Hanieh, 2013). This paper only begins to sketch these aspects and more work is needed to push this analysis forward.

Second, the case explored here represents one among many other examples[79] that underline the ways dependency relations embedded in infrastructure networks, far from being dismantled, are being gradually incorporated into and deepened through neoliberal rituals of state building and development. As this paper has shown, the technocratic approach that infuses current attempts to reform the electricity sector in the Palestinian context not only fails to account for the racialized, fragmented and uneven character of these infrastructures; it also distorts, rationalizes and commodifies these realities through practices and discourses structured around flawed assumptions about privatization and neoliberal development. The critical political economy of infrastructure advanced here, is thus useful to attend to the ways neoliberalism and the broader structures of capitalism are implicated in shaping the Palestinian institutional setting, as well as the everyday

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[79] See for instances the cases of water (Signoles, 2010), telecommunications (Tawil-Souri, 2012) or roads (Jabary Salamanca, 2014).

material conditions of a population already facing the brutal effects of settler colonialism. Hence, by focusing on the privatization/corporatization of electricity, this paper has attempted to contribute to recent research on Palestine studies calling to disrupt conventional notions of neoliberalism that conceal deepening forms of impoverishment and inequality, social and class divisions, and the commodification of all aspects of life (Khalidi and Samour, 2011; Hanieh, 2013).

Finally, although this paper advances a critique of the neoliberal nature of electricity reform, it falls short of addressing alternatives to the privatization model described above or dealing with forms of resistance that challenge strategies of accumulation by dispossession in the electricity sector. Unfortunately there is no space here to discuss the growing debates around public and progressive forms of electricity production and distribution (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012). Yet, it is worth mentioning that there is an increasing global opposition to the privatization/commercialization of essential services. These struggles, which seek to develop more autonomous and self-sufficient forms of service provision, revolve around a wide range of initiatives that include the remunicipalisation of essential services, the establishment of cooperatives, attention to renewable energy resources, fair pricing mechanisms, preserving the right to access basic services, etc. Electrification is thus not just a site from where we can theorize about the entangled nature of colonialism and neoliberalism, it is as well a space of political engagement. In the Palestinian case, the exercise of imagining alternatives to privatization would have to consider not only the objective realities of uneven development and settler colonialism, but also which forms of production, distribution and consumption can deliver more just and equitable provision without jeopardizing the possibilities of the Palestinian community to remain on their lands and their right to self-determination.

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Infrastructure matters and the matters of infrastructure

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

Material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter.
– Karl Marx, 1970

INFRASTRUCTURE MATTERS AND THE MATTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE

In an essay written in the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords, the late Edward Said, one of Oslo's most vocal and consistent critics, concisely captured the tragedy of this colonial treaty between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). He described the agreement as "an instrument of surrender, a Palestinian Versailles": one that entailed the recasting and consolidation of colonial occupation and the birth of a "Vichy-like authority", the Palestinian Authority (Said, 1993). In a subsequent essay titled 'Facts, facts, and more facts', Said criticized the PLO for its neglect and lack of attention to the 'struggle of over geography': "They [Israelis] had the plans, the territory, the maps, the settlements, the roads: we have the wish for autonomy and Israeli withdrawal, with no details, and no power to change anything very much. Needed: a discipline of detail" (1996:27). Joel Wainwright notes that whereas "Said never strays from a commitment to understanding the 'facts on the ground' […] this commitment to these facts, like his nationalism, never led Said to dodge the critical, theoretical task of examining the cultural processes, texts, and histories that produced 'the facts' as such" (2005:1039). Although Said had other preoccupations, he is not alone in overlooking and taking the material infrastructure of settler colonialism and uneven development for granted. Indeed, as suggested in the introduction, accounts of Palestine have largely disregarded the ways in which facts are actually being grounded, materially and symbolically.

Placing the Fabric of Life

This dissertation has sought to offer a thorough account of what infrastructures (as facts on the ground) are, and what they do, and most importantly how infrastructures are produced and the ways they become sites through which settler colonialism and uneven development can be explored. Departing from a series of controversies

that emerged around road and electricity projects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip before and after Oslo, this research has examined the human and non-human actors implicated in these stories, as well as the broader local and global processes in which these actors are situated. It has furthermore explored the material and symbolic aspects of infrastructures, the uneven geographies it produces, as well as their complex, contingent and contested nature. In taking infrastructure as socio-material objects of becoming rather than fixed things, the 'Fabric of Life' has traced practices and processes out of which particular formations of settler colonialism and uneven development are configured and that simultaneously reconfigure the social, economic, political and spatial realities within which Palestine has come to be shaped and framed. The dissertation explores the seemingly banal and often neglected interventions of settler colonial and uneven development into the intimate, material and social ecologies in which people live and the various ways in which they are governed.

Shifting attention from the more spectacular and violent aspects that so often capture the imagination about Palestine to the less appealing socio-material networks that sustain everyday life, the dissertation has focused on infrastructures as objects of inquiry in their own right, not as 'facts on the ground' to be taken for granted. It has revealed the genealogies, resources, planning, ideologies, actors, and charged political economies invested in sustaining these strategic networks. Infrastructures not only define the dialectical relationship between the expansion and shrinkage of settler and native space, but also the ways these essential networks dictate the colonial, logistical, and neoliberal lives of the indigenous population. The historical and geographical study of infrastructure reveals how infrastructures function as living 'archives' of settler colonialism and uneven development or, in other words, as material traces and evidence left behind at a crime scene. The dissertation has proposed a way of 'seeing through infrastructure' that sticks to the material and 'concrete' (sic), rather than more abstract representations that can end up as blurred mischaracterizations of the realities on the ground. This approach sharpens and makes tangible our understanding of the processes, actors and logics that define the life fabric of settler colonialism and uneven development in Palestine.

Attending to the materiality of settler colonialism and uneven development has also enabled an analytical framework that is relevant to the political and human geographies of inequality, dispossession and segregation. This approach responds in many ways to accounts that focus too narrowly on discourse and abstract forces without taking into consideration material aspects and relations of power. Much of the evidence in this dissertation certainly lends support to the idea that a full understanding of inequality, dispossession and segregation

necessarily entails considering its material and concrete forms. These conditions are largely the result of abstract and universal processes of capitalism and colonialism but also a product of the profoundly material forms these power relations and forces adopt in particular settings. For instances, as we have seen, infrastructure development can end sustaining and exacerbating the structures of settler colonialism while enforcing neoliberal policies. Indeed, the power relations of settler colonialism and uneven development are not inscribed in some hypothetical realm, on the contrary they are profoundly embedded in concrete and tangible artifacts, agreements, standards, plans, pipes, wires and meters.

In contrast to existing accounts in Palestine Studies, this dissertation has not approached infrastructure primarily with reference to the geopolitical and processes of statecraft. Instead, it has insisted on the ways a focus on the technical and the socio-material brings settler colonialism and uneven development to center stage. The research has scrutinized the infrastructures themselves by analyzing in detail the experts, projects, techniques, standards, materials, plans, ideology, disputes, and paradigms out of which road and electricity infrastructure result. It has done so with an understanding of the ways infrastructure are realized through practices at the nexus of multiple social, political, economic and spatial fields. This focus on the socio-technical and the socio-material has allowed the dissertation to move beyond deterministic and essentialist accounts about infrastructure as purely technological objects of political rule or assets of economic development. In doing so it certainly has offered a more complex and, indeed, messy picture of the realities on the ground.

Whereas the dissertation has paid careful attention to the material and technical aspects of the fabric of life, no less important has been its focus on the ways infrastructures are imagined and rationalized and the processes through which material spaces come to be understood in relation to the symbolic. The 'imaginative geographies' saturating infrastructure are key to concealing the actual sites where settler colonial and uneven development processes of dispossession and repossession are practiced. It is in this way, for instance that infrastructures become a way of talking about modernity and the (technocratic) necessities of 'development' and statehood without recourse to politics, or, as Abu El-Haj suggests in the case of Archeology, to enacting a settler colonial imagination that substantiates its territorial claims (2002). In this sense, the dissertation has consistently struggled with the inherent tensions and analytical challenge of bringing physical objects together with the images and rituals constructed around and through them. To do this, and paraphrasing Ann Laura Stoler, is to acknowledge the potential and problems in sustaining a balance

between the analytic power that infrastructure carries as an evocative metaphor and the critical purchase it offers for grounding process of settler colonialism and uneven development (2013). Moreover, this exercise is also necessary to account for the ways “imaginative geographies circulate in material forms and become sedimented over time to form an internally structured and, crucially, self-reinforcing ‘archive’” (Al-Mahfedi, 2011).

Finally, the historical approach advanced in this study has been crucial not only to understanding the ways power is productive of symbolic and concrete spaces and socio-economic relations, but also in showing how past relations of rule inform the material, tangible infrastructural landscapes of the present. Recalling the quote by Derek Gregory with which we began this dissertation, “The past is always present, of course, in precarious and necessarily partial forms: it has material presence, as object and built form, as archive and text, and it also haunts the present as memory and even as absence. Because the past is always fragmentary, then, and because it casts such shadows over our own present, it needs to be constantly re-constructed and interrogated.” (Elden et al, 2011). This perspective has enabled us to carefully consider the continuities and discontinuities that inform the material infrastructures and objects through which settler colonialism and uneven development become manifested. In doing so, the dissertation has underlined the critical and inherent relationship that exists between infrastructure, power, space and populations and its rich and dense texturality. This focus challenges, as Stoler puts it, “a deeper set of assumptions about the relationship between colonial pasts and colonial presents” (2013:5). In the case of this study, and contrary to predominant accounts that have located Palestine too quickly into the postcolonial, the historical approach substantiates the ongoing and contingent nature of settler colonialism. Focusing on the settler colonial past and present has also revealed an often-neglected and crucial aspect of these facts on the ground: that is, the ways in which infrastructures becomes sites where relations of rule are often contested and sometimes subverted, and thus, where histories can be potentially remade.

The potential and limits of the Fabric of Life

Influenced by the writings of scholars from fields as varied as science and technology studies, critical urban studies, political economy and settler colonial studies, this dissertation has offered an innovative path of theoretical, analytical and empirical possibility, especially in relation to Palestine studies. By historicizing, materializing and politicizing infrastructure, exploring its multiple and complex scales, and bringing together its material and symbolic aspects, this study contests not only

popular and scholarly imaginative geographies of Zionism that have sought to pre-determine assumptions and readings about Palestine. Crucially, it also challenges the marginalization of materiality and the technical in Palestine and Middle East studies more broadly –hinting at the conceptual limits that still define much of this scholarship. While the prevailing logic of civil society and nationalism (articulated as statism or state building) continues to saturate mainstream studies about Palestine, debates on regime change, democratic transition and authoritarianism have come to constitute, as Parker notes, "the, central theme in contemporary political sociology of the Middle East" (2004:1; see also Hanafi and Tabar, 2002; Bogaert, 2011; Hanieh, 2014). Not only are these approaches insufficient and limited, but also, because of their liberal (political) character, they are inadequate to study an illiberal and settler colonial context like Palestine. By focusing on the ways infrastructures connects to broader political, social, economic and spatial processes, namely settler colonialism and capitalism, this dissertation has contributed to recent scholarship that, as shown before, explores what an alternative scholarly and political project might look like when paying attention to these questions.

Indeed, crucial to this research has been an interdisciplinary approach that brings materiality together with settler colonialism and critical political economy in the study of Palestine. In doing so, the dissertation has responded to recent efforts to position Palestine within the comparative framework of settler colonialism (Veracini, 2006; Jabary et al, 2012) as well as to critics that have argued for the need of a critical political economy to fully understand colonization and dispossession (Khalidi and Samour, 2011; Hanieh, 2013). As we have seen, this perspective is essential at many levels. First, it disrupts the recurrent exceptionalism that frames Palestine by reconnecting this region to a larger set of settler colonial contexts as well as to the global capitalist forces that shape this region, and of which Palestine is an integral part (Jabary et al, 2011; Tabar and Jabary, 2013). Second, it opens up an avenue to explore the intricate relationship between settler colonialism and capitalism in the region, both in its historical instantiations and contemporary juncture. And third, it locates Palestine in the comparative and analytical framework of settler colonial studies in ways that challenge conventional wisdom on Palestine, and disrupt the logic of Zionism by exposing its technologies of rule and "shattering its projection of uniqueness" (Lubin, 2008:673).

By bringing assemblage and materiality to bear on settler colonialism and political economy, the dissertation has resisted the tendency to solely cast infrastructures as iconic expressions of colonialism and/or neoliberalism. In doing so, it has contributed to the study of these questions in two ways. On the one hand, and responding to calls to

attend the conditions and historiographies that underpin the spatialities of settler colonialism (Edmonds, 2010), the study of infrastructure grids has offered a detailed account of the dialectical and ‘productive’ ways in which settler and native space are produced, as well as the materiality of settler colonialism more broadly. On the other, it has avoided the inclination to mobilize the categories of settler colonialism and neoliberalism as pre-constituted theoretical explanations. This is important because taking infrastructures as social-material formations resulting from and realized through diverse assemblages –of institutions, actors, and practices— shows that these ‘forces’ are “’less than coherent’ outcomes of interacting practices, actors and institutions” (Anderson et al, 2012:175). Thinking about infrastructures in this way is crucial to attend to the “messiness and complexity of phenomena; an ethos that is committed to “process-based ontologies that challenge conventional explanations by focusing on materially diverse configurations; and an ethos that emphasizes the open-ended, unfinished nature of social formations” (Idem). This understanding, as it is clear from the dissertation, does not refute the force and relevance of settler colonialism and capitalism as structural processes, rather it seeks to fully understand these from the bottom up in ways that create space for political possibility and change.

Whereas the dissertation set itself to explore infrastructure in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the 1967 occupation, the research has shown the need to move beyond the straight jacket of the ‘school of occupation studies’ (see introduction) to offer a full understanding of the processes investigated. This is particularly so because socio-technical assemblages are constituted within a broader array of histories and geographies that exceed rigid spatial and temporal boundaries, both literally and conceptually. Not crossing the ‘green line’ –literally and scholarly, in either direction— and thus taking for granted the fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic, will always and necessarily result in providing only part of the story. In this sense, further research needs to engage more actively in unearthing the construction of infrastructure networks –from rails and roads to electricity and gas— and its relation to modern Zionism, conflicts around the British concessions for essential services and resource management, the role of experts and entrepreneurs, the relevance of infrastructure to questions of Hebrew and Arab labor, the historical designs of grids at the municipal and community level, the governance of infrastructure, everyday life experiences of infrastructure, the interrelationship between space, infrastructure and subjectivity, and the contested histories and geographies of infrastructure related transformations. These and other themes and questions inform the research projects that must begin where this dissertation ends, an investigation that would aim to document and analyze an alternative history of Palestine in which

electrification and the development of electricity grids play a central role in directing, organizing and shaping space and everyday life. To do this the study would trace the genealogy of electricity from the colonial past to the present. This would not be, however, a history in the conventional sense, but rather a punctuated narrative of successive projects of electrification that are shaped by changing socio-political and economic configurations and transformations in the control over and distribution of electricity.

Finally, as shown throughout the dissertation, if infrastructure networks are central to expanding, experimenting and consolidating profoundly unjust processes of settler colonialism and capitalism that weaken and fragment a population in struggle. In that case, what is to be done to challenge the violent and misguided logics informing infrastructure and to open up radical spaces of political possibility in Palestine? Whereas attention has been paid to the contested nature of infrastructure, this dissertation might not have done enough to provide concrete and specific formulations of what an alternative(s) might look like. Certainly this was not among the aims or purposes of the dissertation, yet, in retrospective, these concerns seem to be more relevant now; especially because of the encroachment of the dynamics studied, the urgency of the moment and the realization of the galvanizing potential of struggles around infrastructure. Infrastructures effectively offer not only sites from where we can theorize but also significant spaces of political possibility.

Leaving aside the fact that a praxis-oriented exercise was not the goal, it is clear that more could have been done to translate this body of critical research from sentiment into action. In other words, to move beyond critical reflection into the realm of practice, to explore, imagine and experiment with what Harvey termed 'spaces of hope' (2000). It is in this way that we can aim for more emancipatory geographies, spaces of possibility and knowledge as a tool for struggle. In spite of not having engaged in such an exercise, this research takes some comfort in the idea that social and political change needs both the 'practical optimism of the will' and the theoretical analyses that emerges from the 'pessimism of the intellect' (Gramsci, 1971:175). Ultimately, it is hoped that this dissertation provided insights into how to find and create holes in the fabric of settler colonialism and uneven development, cracks that can contribute to its dismantlement and to empowering the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

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Appendices

BACKGROUND PAPER ONE

Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine

Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie, Sobhi Samour

INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *settler colonial studies* emerges out of a March 2011 conference on settler colonialism in Palestine organised by the Palestine Society and the London Middle East Institute at the School of Oriental and African Studies. It is our hope that this issue will catalyse creative, collaborative work that puts the settler colonial framework firmly on the agenda of Palestine studies. The need for such engagement arises from our recognition that while Zionism and the Palestinians are gradually being included in the growing body of scholarly works on comparative settler colonialism, the analytical framework that comparative settler colonialism offers has yet to enter the field of Palestine studies.[1]

From the earliest Palestinian accounts to the vast majority of contemporary research, the crimes committed against Palestinian society by the Zionist movement and the state it built have been well recorded. Zionism is an ideology and a political movement that subjects Palestine and Palestinians to structural and violent forms of dispossession, land appropriation, and erasure in the pursuit of a new Jewish state and society. As for other settler colonial movements, for Zionism, the control of land is a zero-sum contest fought against the indigenous population. The drive to control the maximum amount of land is at its centre. The continued existence of Palestinians, therefore, poses severe problems for the completion of the Zionist project, and, consequently, informs Israeli state policies against Palestinians inside Israel, in the Occupied Territories, and in exile. Consequently, transfer – a Zionist euphemism for the coordinated, at times randomly applied, plethora of legal, military, and economic tactics to expel Palestinians – has been part of Israeli policy and public discourse since the creation of the state.[2] As Israeli historian and neoconservative Benny Morris remarked, 'had [David Ben Gurion] carried out full expulsion – rather than partial – he would have stabilized the State of Israel for generations'.[3] Yet, plagued by 'instability', the settler colonial structure undergirding Israeli practices takes on a painful array of manifestations: aerial and maritime bombardment, massacre and invasion, home demolitions, land theft, identity card confiscation, racist laws and loyalty tests, the wall, the siege on Gaza, cultural appropriation, dependence on willing (or unwilling) native collaboration regarding security

arrangements, all with the continued support and backing of imperial powers.

In the absence of a cohesive framework, scholarship often appears to catalogue Zionist practices and offences against Palestinians as a series of distinct – yet related – events. The Palestinian nation is pushed from one catastrophe to another as the Zionist project accelerates. However, viewed through the lens of settler colonialism, the *Nakba* in 1948 is not simply a precondition for the creation of Israel or the outcome of early Zionist ambitions; the *Nakba* is not a singular event but is manifested today in the continuing subjection of Palestinians by Israelis. In order to move forward and create a transformative, liberatory research agenda, it is necessary to analyse Zionism's structural continuities and the ideology that informs Israeli policies and practices in Israel and toward Palestinians everywhere. In other words, while Israel's tactics have often been described as settler colonial, the settler colonial *structure* underpinning them must be a central object of analysis.[4] By bringing together scholars of both comparative settler colonialism and Palestine studies, this special issue intends to further a nascent conversation, and hopes to provide a spark for future cross- disciplinary research that contributes to both fields.

Despite the endurance of Israeli settler colonialism, settler colonial analysis has largely fallen into disuse in Palestine studies. As a framework, settler colonialism once served as a primary ideological and political touchstone for the Palestinian national movement, and informed the intellectual work of many committed activists and revolutionary scholars, whether Palestinians, Israelis, or allies.[5] Today, research tends to focus on Palestine as an exceptional case, constituted in local contexts, in particular the West Bank. But these problems are far from simply the result of shifts in academic knowledge and practice: the Palestinian liberation movement has seen a series of ruptures and changes in emphasis, and in many ways scholarly production accurately mirrors the dynamics of incoherent contemporary Palestinian politics. Recent Palestinian political history has been a long march away from a liberation agenda and towards a piecemeal approach to the establishment of some kind of sovereignty under the structure of the Israeli settler colonial regime. In this environment, it is not surprising that even scholarship written in solidarity with Palestinians tends to shy away from structural questions. Much of the contemporary literature tends to take on micro-political issues or Israeli administrative practices within a given context and prodigiously overwork them. But when did Palestinians ever find themselves in a 'post-colonial' condition? When did the ongoing struggle over land and for return become a 'post-conflict' situation? When did Israel become a 'post-Zionist' society? When did indigenous Palestinians in the Galilee (for example) become

an 'ethnic minority'? And when did the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the consequent fortification of Palestinian reserves become 'state-building'?

Moreover, the trend towards studying the occupation often internalises it as an ontological category distinct from the larger structures of Israeli settler colonialism. The occupation imposes boundaries on space and time; and categories, discourses, and materialities that are embedded in colonial power relations are operationalised in this literature. The Green Line, the border between Israel and the Palestinian reserves, is one example of this phenomenon: it has become a powerful symbolic and material signifier that enforces, and takes for granted, the fragmentation of the Palestinian polity. With few exceptions, it is a line that is rarely crossed in scholarly accounts of Palestine – in either direction. Different Palestinian populations have come to be represented as isolated, analytically separate, pieces of an impossible puzzle. In addition, the focus on the second stage of colonisation, the 1967 occupation, emphasises settlement by Israelis in the West Bank and absolves previous generations of Zionists and Israel itself of settler colonialism.

'For natives', as Patrick Wolfe puts it, 'the issue is that, at the hands of the settlers, they face [physical and symbolic] elimination'.[6] Given such a threat, the central question for committed scholarship and liberatory movements should be how to develop a praxis that brings back decolonisation and liberation as the imperative goal. The advantage of advancing settler colonialism as a relevant interpretative framework for the study of Zionism is not only that it can offer conceptual and political possibilities for how we read Palestine today, but that it also dismantles deep-seeded analyses and assumptions sustaining claims of exceptionalism. It brings Israel into comparison with cases such as South Africa, Rhodesia and French-Algeria, and earlier settler colonial formations such as the United States, Canada or Australia, rather than the contemporary European democracies to which Israel seeks comparison. For Palestine, it means the reiteration of the fact that Palestinians are an indigenous people, and an alignment of Palestine scholarship with indigenous and native studies.

In this context, John Collins notes, the challenge is to bring all the relevant tools of critically engaged scholarship [...] in order to pursue two related objectives: to understand the complex set of structures and processes [...] that have combined to produce the intolerable reality evident today; and to think creatively about how this understanding might enable individuals to transform that reality.[7]

Otherwise, settler colonialism remains a descriptive category that does not move beyond sentiment and into strategy. While activists, both in Palestine and outside it, continue to push back against Zionist encroachment, intensify the demand for equal rights, and build a boycott, divestment and sanctions movement aimed at shaming and delegitimising Israel internationally, the creative offerings of the settler colonial studies paradigm remain underutilised. This lack of rigorous engagement has consequences for movement building. The historic response to settler colonialism has been the struggle for decolonisation; in the absence of a settler colonial analysis, Palestinian strategies have tended to target or accommodate settler colonial outcomes rather than aiming to decolonise the structure itself.

Equally important, the analysis enabled by the settler colonial paradigm offers a powerful political tool to reorient and recreate genuine bi-directional solidarity alliances and political fraternity. As attested by the cover of this issue, a declaration of solidarity for Palestinians in their struggle against Zionist aggression by the Organization of Solidarity for the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL), this convergence is not new. The settler colonial perspective offers the possibility of a new in-gathering of movements, harnessing each other's strengths for an active, mutual, and principled Palestinian alignment with the Arab struggle for self- determination, and indigenous struggles in North America, Latin America, Oceania, and elsewhere. Such an alignment would expand the tools available to Palestinians and their solidarity movement, and reconnect the struggle to its own history of anti-colonial internationalism. At its core, this internationalist approach asserts that the Palestinian struggle against Zionist settler colonialism can only be won when it is embedded within, and empowered by, broader struggles – all anti-imperial, all anti-racist, and all struggling to make another world possible.

The issue opens with Zachary Lockman's critical and constructive engagement with Gershon Shafir's landmark study on the formative period of the Zionist labour movement and its colonisation strategy (*Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*). Lockman presents an alternative historical narrative of the evolution of the Zionist labour movement, and highlights the coercive power employed by the British colonial state in Palestine against Palestinian Arabs. Ilan Pappé's article meditates on the complications of applying the framework of comparative settler colonialism – which is largely based on historical case studies – to the specific case of Israeli settler colonialism, a project that is still expanding its frontiers. David Lloyd's paper engages with the work of Giorgio Agamben on the state of exception and deals with the following question: to what extent can the Palestinian situation be understood as unique?

These pieces are followed by two case studies from Palestine, one by Mansour Nasasra highlighting the case of the Zionist expulsions and village destructions in the Naqab, the other by Magid Shihade on the practices employed by the state in fragmenting and dissolving Palestinian social identities. Shir Hever's article discusses Israel's approaches towards indigenous labour and the indigenous economy. In comparing the Zionist colonisation of Palestine with the cases of Australia and the United States, Patrick Wolfe points to the historical and material conditions that underpin this project. Wolfe argues that, contrary to common assumptions, Zionism constitutes an intensification of, rather than a departure from, settler colonialism. The last feature article is by indigenous scholar and activist Waziyatawin, who recently visited Palestine as part of a delegation of feminist women of colour. Here she discusses some of the lessons Palestine afforded her regarding indigenous resistance and struggles for sovereignty.

We also offer excerpts from two historical documents outlining the long struggle for Palestinian liberation. They highlight some of the ways in which settler colonialism as a paradigm has historically been used in work on Palestine. An excerpt taken from Palestinian trade unionist George Mansour's *The Arab worker under the Palestine mandate* (1937) opens the section. Mansour provides a clear picture of the dire socio-economic consequences that Zionist colonisation, and British support for it, had on Palestinian indigenous workers and Palestinian society as a whole. Along these lines, he exposes the *Histadrut's* 'conquest of labour' strategy and refutes British claims about the positive impact Britain's support for a national Jewish home had on indigenous Palestinian society. This is followed by an excerpt taken from Palestinian intellectual and political activist Fayez A. Sayegh's *Zionist colonialism in Palestine* (1965). Sayegh's description of the structural features underpinning Zionist colonisation – and the consequences for the Palestinian nation – is arguably one of the clearest and most potent analyses of its generation. Finally, hoping to expand the conversation on settler colonialism within Palestine studies, we offer the Arabic translation of Patrick Wolfe's seminal essay, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native'. This is a foundational text for comparative settler colonial studies, and we hope that it will speak to Arab scholars and activists alike.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Omar Jabary Salamanca is completing a PhD in political and human geography at the Middle East and North Africa Research Group, Ghent University. His research examines spatial modalities of settler colonialism and uneven development in Palestine, with a particular focus on the socio-economic and political histories of infrastructure networks. Mezna Qato is completing a DPhil in history at the University of Oxford. Her thesis is a social history of the formation and development of educational regimes for Palestinians. Kareem Rabie is completing his PhD in the Department of Anthropology at the City University of New York Graduate Center. His dissertation research examines the present push towards privatisation in the housing market, and the contemporary state-building project in the West Bank. His research interests include state theory, political economy and uneven development, and the formation of political ideology. Sobhi Samour is completing his PhD in the department of economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. His thesis is on settler-colonial responses to the forces and relations of production in indigenous societies, with particular reference to the Palestinian economy.

NOTES

1. F. Bateman, and L. Pilkington (eds), Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); C. Elkins, and S. Pedersen, Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies London: Routledge, 2005).

2. See, e.g., R. Blecher, 'Citizens without Sovereignty: Transfer and Ethnic Cleansing in Israel', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47 (2005): pp. 725-754; N. Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

3. Interview with Benny Morris, 'Survival of the Fittest', *Haaretz*, 09/01/04.

4. Some of the notable exceptions include, N. Abdo, *Women in Israel: Race, Gender and Citizenship* (London: Zed Books, 2011); N. Abdo, and N. Yuval-Davis, 'Palestine, Israel and the Zionist Settler Project', in D. Stasiulis, and N. Yuval-Davis (eds), *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: SAGE, 1995); J. Collins, *Global Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); R. Greenstein, *Genealogies of Conflict: Class, Identity, and State in Palestine/Israel and South Africa* (Hanover, NH: University Press New England, 1995); S. D. Hassan, 'Displaced Nations: Israeli Settlers and Palestinian Refugees', in F. Bateman, and L. Pilkington (eds), *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture, London* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): pp. 186-203; and S. Makdisi, 'Zionism Then and Now', in F. Bateman, and L. Pilkington (eds), *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture, London* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): pp. 237-256; J. Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Routledge, 2006); G. Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Verso, 2008); L. Veracini, *Israel and Settler Society* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

5. Much of the literature published by the Research Center of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the 60s and 70s explicitly framed the conflict as a settler colonial one. Founded in 1965, its publications intended to educate cadres, forge strategic relationships with other anticolonial movements and disseminate its narrative to the outside world. For one such publication, see Fayez Sayegh's essay published in the document section. In this context, the Socialist Organization in Israel (Matzpen, founded in 1962) must also be mentioned. Matzpen offered a robust analysis of the settler colonial nature of Israeli society and unpacked the regional context of the conflict. See A. Orr, H. Hanegbi and M. Machover, 'The Class Nature of Israeli Society', *New Left Review,* January-February (1971), pp. 3- 26, and for a recent contribution by its co-founder, Moshé Machover: 'Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Resolution'. Available at: http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/articles/moshe%20machover%20%2020 06l ecture_b.pdf Accessed: 15/03/12. For the nature of early radical scholarly analysis of settler colonialism in Palestine, see: B. Abu-Laban, I. Abu-Lughod

(ed.), *Settler Regimes in Africa and the Arab World: The Illusion of Endurance* (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1974); A. Emmanuel, ‘White Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism’, *New Left Review,* May-June (1972), pp. 35-57; J. Hilal, ‘Imperialism and Settler-Colonialism in West Asia: Israel and the Arab Palestinian Struggle’, *UTAFITI: Journal of the Arts and Social Sciences, University of Dar Es Salaam***,** 1, 1 (1976), pp. 51–69; G. Jabbour, *Settler Colonialism in Southern Africa and the Middle East* (Khartoum: University of Khartoum, 1976); M. Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial Settler-State?,* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973); F. Trabulsi, ‘The Palestine Problem: Zionism and Imperialism in the Middle East’, *New Left Review,* Sept-Oct (1969), pp. 53-90.

6. lezP. Wolfe, ‘Palestine, Project Europe and the (Un)Making of the New Jew: In Memory of Edward W. Said’, in N. Curthoys, and D. Ganguly (eds), *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), p. 333. 7 J Collins, *Global Palestine*, p. 10.

BACKGROUND PAPER TWO

After Oslo: Settler Colonialism, Neoliberal Development and Liberation[80]

Linda Tabar and Omar Jabary Salamanca

INTRODUCTION

In an essay written in the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords, Edward Said, one of Oslo's fiercest critics, concisely captured the tragedy of this colonial treaty between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Said described the agreement as "an instrument of surrender, a Palestinian Versailles": one that entailed the recasting and consolidation of colonial occupation and the birth of a "Vichy-like authority", the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Said, 1993). Two decades on have confirmed Said premonitions and exposed the bankruptcy of a US-imposed "peace process" that excluded the vast majority of the Palestinian people, indefinitely suspending their inalienable rights. Likewise the illusory hope for "state building" under the grip of settler colonialism has been shattered. The accords, in their own terms, constituted a scaffold for the reproduction of socio-economic inequalities and dependency, the denial of Palestinian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the outright rejection of self-determination (see Usher, 1999; Massad, 2006; Ahmad, 2006; Said, 2007). In fact, contrary to what it is often assumed, the Oslo accords were not a 'failure', for as Adam Hanieh recently put it, they were an instrument designed to effectively consolidate and deepen the structures of occupation laid down by Israeli colonialism in the preceding decades (Hanieh, 2013:71). Whereas for most Palestinians this agreement inaugurated *two lost decades*, for Zionism it facilitated the expansion of its land base to consolidating a century-old settler colonial endeavor. In effect, this "peace of the weak", as Eqbal Ahmad put it, relieved Israel from its duties towards the occupied population, enabled the entrenchment of Zionist settler colonialism, and institutionalized an apartheid regime that transformed the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into Bantustans (Ahmad, 1998). Today, the enduring violence of Oslo and settler colonialism is best reflected in the growing material and symbolic fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic: that is the Diaspora, the Palestinian

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[80] This essay introduces a special theme issue which is the product of a three year process that began in 2010 with an international conference held at Birzeit University under the title "Geographies of Aid Intervention in Palestine" –organized by the Center for Development Studies (Birzeit University) and the Middle East and North Africa Research Group (Ghent University) with the support of the Flemish Interuniversity Council. This was followed by a research program on "Alternatives to mainstream Development and Neoliberalism in Palestine" that was carried out by the Center for Development Studies with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

'citizens' of Israel, and the residents of the occupied territories. For Said, the PLO's capitulation, and the consequences this entailed, as well as the endorsement of Israel's designation of Palestinians to those confined in isolated and walled reserves, were ultimately Oslo's "tragic mishap" (Imseis, 2010:266).

To this day, and in spite of these contradictions, the PA, Palestinian and foreign capitalists, and the cohort of international development organizations, humanitarian agencies, and financial institutions which were called upon to finance, sustain and oversee the settlement of the Palestinian question, have kept Oslo's development model at all costs. These actors remain stubbornly committed to the main rhetorical claims of the accords: namely that the endless rounds of futile negotiations must continue and that economic development will bring 'peace' to the region. In fact, as the Middle East advisor to the World Bank Ambassador Abdallah Bouhabib put it in a 1994 interview, "how often does it happen that world peace depends on an economic development program?" (Bouhabib, 1994:74). Two decades and more than US$8 billions later, the neoliberal development experiment that accompanied Oslo, and its technocratic and depoliticizing framework, remains largely unchallenged. If politically, through the accords, Zionism achieved the long sought "legitimation of its settler-colony" from the "representatives" of the indigenous population (Massad, 1994: 85). Economically, the entire Oslo project was founded upon neoliberal policies, and the free market orthodoxy of the "Washington Consensus" (Khalidi and Samour, 2011), which has gone as far as to become codified in article 21 of the Palestinian basic law. In effect, capitalist development became law in the territories. This religious-like belief in the mirage of economic growth was grounded in the "unsophisticated but common assumption about linear progress between peace, security and development" (Le More, 2008:7), which, in turn, served to hide the interwoven Zionist settler colonial and global capitalist structures of subordination that structured the Oslo experiment from the outset.

This special issue proposes a critical lens through which we can begin to unsettle and rethink the foundations for development theory and practice in Palestine. It steams from a concern with the fundamental flaws of the development apparatus that accompanied Oslo's 'false decolonization'. An apparatus that has persistently silenced and neglected the political realities on the ground and, most problematically, has contributed to sustaining and exacerbating the structures of settler colonialism and apartheid while enforcing rapacious neoliberal policies. The papers in this issue, rather than venturing into a facile evaluation of development's successes and failures, seek to understand what development does, who does it, and whom it actually benefits (Ferguson, 1990). They use political economy and settler

colonial perspectives to revisit and relocate development theory and practice in relation to liberation, while recognizing the internal divisions and class interests that splinter the national struggle. In doing so, this special issue examines the entangled nature of development and settler colonialism – their shared genealogy (Kothari, 2002) – and how this relationship is being contested today. For in spite of the harm Oslo has caused in terms of fragmenting the Palestinian national movement, the loss of land, the endurance of humiliation, etc., this process has been unable to neutralize the Palestinian people and their struggle for their rights and liberation.

This issue therefore asks, how has the development experiment shaped by Oslo reconfigured Palestine and Palestinians and vice versa? Which are the broader historical and structural processes and global and regional power dynamics that have shaped the history and present condition of Palestine? What are the emerging (class, gender and race) formations structuring the Palestinian society vis-à-vis neoliberal development and settler colonialism? And how have these divisions, and the creation of a complicit native authority refracted the liberation struggle? Also, in which ways are development and humanitarian actors, in addition to a Palestinian capitalist class closely related to the PA, complicit in the reproduction of socio-economic, political and spatial inequalities? Or how does a conceptualization of development that goes beyond the prevalent and entrenched exceptionalism that characterizes Palestine might look like? This special issue however not only takes stock of one of the most protracted anti-colonial struggles of our time, but it speaks much more broadly to the condition of people throughout the global south, and equally in the north, who are returning to the notion of "people's power" and struggling to rebuild mass movements against capitalist and imperialist domination, from the Arab uprisings and the socialist movements in Latin America, to the occupy movements in Europe and North America.

MISSING LINKS IN THE PALESTINIAN DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE

While Oslo has become a subject of considerable debate during the last two decades, there has been little dialogue between the development model advanced since the early 1990s and the settler colonial nature of this 'conflict'. The papers in this issue contribute to bridging this gap and to exposing some of the limits of the prevailing assumptions that exist in the development literature on Palestine. By and large, research on development aid has tended to focus on the structural role that occupation plays in undermining and weakening the possibilities of Palestinian development, and in showing how this has effectively shaped development policies on the ground (see Roy, 1995; Brynen, 2000; Keating et al, 2005; Le More, 2008). In these studies however, as

important as they are, the symbolic and material neoliberal underpinnings of development policy, its effects and mediating actors have often been overlooked. This is crucial as neoliberalism is at the core of the Oslo project and as Adam Hanieh puts it, “a central corollary to the political direction promoted by the Israeli government, the PA, and their US and European Union supporters” (2008). Despite recent studies (see Hanieh, 2008; Turner, 2009; Hever, 2010; Khalidi and Samour, 2011), neoliberalism’s relationship to the Palestinian development model has yet to be fully scrutinized.

Indeed, part of the problem in the literature is the tendency to assume that reforming the current neoliberal development model can have any significant impacts on the ground. This perspective fails to acknowledge the existing structural conditions imposed by Oslo, and donor’s imperial alignment with Zionism’s political agenda. In fact, as Mushtaq H. Khan argues, talk on reform seems to have “jumped the gun” in a society that ultimately does not have sovereignty, rights or a state and that is engaged in a liberation struggle: reforms cannot achieve efficient development but rather small improvements in the efficiency of aid delivery (Khan, 2010:5). Taghdisi-Rad affirms this position and argues that since the inception of Oslo “the political agendas of donors and their associated governments, and not the needs of the Palestinian population, have determined the donor behavior in the territories”, and this implies that “aid can hardly be expected to act as a tool of economic development in the first place” (Taghdisi-Rad, 2011:5-6). Few studies, however take this conclusion as their starting point. This special issue intervenes here and shows that development aid was used to conceal the absence of a real political process; and as such, development not only became complicit in the Israel’s colonial project, it subsidized the occupation, sustained and reproduced settler colonial structures of power and oppression. Development and humanitarian aid intervention in Palestine, like elsewhere in the world, have been used as bandage-aid, a substitute for politics, or politics by other means.

While many of the above mentioned studies have undeniably advanced our critical understanding of the Oslo development model, they also do not go far enough to acknowledge and incorporating a settler colonial analysis that explores how development theories and practices are *regulative* and *productive,* and the ways they produce their own effects on the colonized native population in relation to the larger Israeli settler colonial project. This is not surprising considering that settler colonial analyses has largely fallen into disuse in Palestine studies. Today research on development, like much scholarship on Palestine, tends to incorporate the exceptionalism and fragmentary logics of settler

colonialism[81]. As a result, different Palestinian populations, in different local contexts –either inside Israel, in exile, or in the West Bank—often come to be represented as isolated, analytically separate, and distinct from the larger structures of Israeli settler colonialism (Jabary Salamanca et al, 2011:3). These problems are however far from simply the result of shifts in knowledge and practice: "the Palestinian liberation movement has seen a series of ruptures and changes in emphasis, and in many ways scholarly production accurately mirrors the dynamics of incoherent contemporary Palestinian politics." (Idem). Whereas in recent years, and important and welcome shift in the scholarly literature has opened the door for a more global and comparative approach (see Veracini, 2006; Collins, 2011), the literature on development in Palestine is yet to come to terms with a full understanding of how development interacts with settler colonial policies and designs vis-à-vis the fragmentation of the native populations and their territories. Or how acknowledging the actually existing settler colonial context in which contemporary theory and practices of development are reworked, through different interventions, whether alternative grassroots practices, indigenous knowledge, or national and global resistance movements. Palestine might be alone in being subjected to a contemporary form of settler colonialism that, as Jabary Salamanca argues in this issue, has solicited a cohort of international development actors and financial institutions, to effectively sustain and reproduce itself. Yet, when looked through a comparative analytic lens that situates this case in relation to what Collins calls the global and settler colonial turn in Palestine studies (Collins, 2011), Palestine looses much of its exceptional allure.

In seeking to unpack and rethink the tangled and complex relationship between settler colonialism, development and liberation, this special issue builds on Palestinian literature that for decades has reflected on the impossibilities of mainstream development in the face of ongoing settler colonial induced economic pauperization and dispossession. Economist Yusif Sayigh long concluded that "meaningful and far-reaching development cannot be achieved, or even sought, under the conditions of dependence-cum-dispossession" (1988: 279). Yet, rather than understanding Sayigh's assertion as a call for "anti-development" amid the realities of prolonged colonialism; we should see it as a challenge to think about forms of development that can provide the necessary material needs for Palestinians to resist Israel's enduring settler colonialism. For, as Joel Wainwright boldly puts it, "we cannot not want development" (2008:10). If development's stubborn 'will to

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[81] Some of the notable exceptions in development studies include an edited volume by George T. Abed, *The Palestinian economy: studies in development under prolonged occupation* being an exception. Other non development related scholarship includes.

improve' (Li, 2007) the indigenous population has not produced the benevolent and utopian goals it claims, the development literature on Palestine has nevertheless looked at what it has produced. These studies explore how the development apparatus has, as in other global south contexts, persistently and consciously transformed politically active Palestinian social and political movements into depoliticized, professionalized civil society organizations (Hammami, 1995; Kuttab, 2007). But also the ways it has created new globalized actors and discourses that are de-linked from the national anti-colonial struggle (Hanafi and Tabar, 2005). In other words, it has produced a 'moderate,' pacified and dependent class. More recently, studies suggest that development assistance has created an axis of interests that span local Palestinian capitalists, political elite, local NGOs and international development actors, who are re-colonizing and privatizing the Palestinian struggle (Nakhleh, 2012)

This special issue proposes alternatives ways through which to examine these realities and investigate the interlocking structures of power that have created these conditions. It explores the overlooked ways aid, development, and capitalism intersect, interact with and reinforce structures of power, and particularly Zionist settler colonial exploitation and subjugation. In writing back from the settler colony, this special issue, therefore, investigates how dominant development interventions and neoliberalism have been territorialized, experienced and resisted– across both sides of the green line and beyond in the diaspora. The essays look at how capitalist, settler colonial and racist structures of dominance have been reconfigured, and are being produced and reproduced within and through development. They explore how international development organizations, humanitarian agencies and neoliberalism introduced new forms of governmentality that have reshaped the subjectivities and identities of the colonized. And they trace how development apparatus has contributed to pacifying the national movement, transforming the political, by often refracting and replacing the arenas and modes through which politics is conducted. At the same time, these essays also rethink development in relation to the project of liberation, and the situated ways Palestinians are reclaiming and rearticulating development in the struggle for liberation. They also go beyond Zionism's attempt to fragment the Palestinian people through Oslo, and analytically reconnect the Palestinian communities together under the framework of the liberation struggle.

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT IN THE SETTLER COLONIAL PRESENT

This special issue draws upon existing critiques of development and use political economy, and settler colonial studies in order to deepen these problematizations, while bringing overlapping race, class and gender structures of domination back into view. In what follows we lay out the theoretical perspectives that inform this set of essays and illustrate what it means to draw on these different disciplines in order to unsettle development and open a space to explore struggles for alternatives forms of development.

To be clear "development" is as an elusive and contested idea, with a variety of meanings in different times and places, profoundly marked by tensions and contradictions; if development conjures an image of a universal and seducing project of growth and improvement, in practice it can be thought of as a battlefield, a continuous intellectual project and a profoundly material process (Apter, 1987:7). In their seminal book, Cowen and Shenton differentiate between two often-confused meanings of development: development as an immanent and unintentional process such as the development of capitalism, and development as an intentional activity such as the deliberate plan to 'develop' and remake the 'Third World' in the context of decolonization (1998: 50). This crucial distinction between development as intervention and development as structural change, rest nevertheless on the premise that the two are fundamentally related in historically specific ways, if not inextricably intertwined (Bebbington, 2003). Indeed, as Wainwright sustains "development is a supplement to capitalism, a historical-geographical process taken to be outside of capitalism, and yet something always already included, to make it whole, to allow capital to assume a sense of historical purpose and directionality" (2008:12). It is in line with these conceptions, that the research in this issue explores development as it materializes in the Palestinian context.

Settler colonial studies provide a necessary corrective to the "conflict" lens, which has long been the consensus on the question of Palestine, and that informs development interventions vis-à-vis Palestine and Palestinians. This "conflict" approach distorts the foundational violence and nature of the settler colonial encounter in Palestine, the asymmetric power relations that define it, and the political, economical and social structures that it puts in place. Unlike classic colonialism, which aims to control the "natives" from a metropolitan center –like in the case of Britain's rule in India— settler colonialism seeks to "erase indigenous peoples in order to replacing them with another socio-political body" – as in the case of the United States or Algeria (Veracini, 2013). As Patrick Wolfe puts it, settler colonialism involves a "logic of elimination" that "strives for the dissolution of native societies" in order to erect "a new

colonial society on the expropriated land base" (2006: 387-388). This logic of elimination proceeds through different technologies of violence; from the "erasure of indigeneity" and the negation of the native society's status as a national group, to the physically, temporal and spatial fragmentation of the colonized, and domination over them through strategies of "spatial sequestration" and the repression of their economy (ibid: 389-404). In the final analysis, "settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event." (ibid: 388). The specificities of the settler colonial encounter, therefore, have direct implications for development in Palestine, which cannot continue to be ignored. The economic development and the privileges accorded to the settler society necessarily come at the expense of the native society. Laying out what is at stake, Wolfe summarizes the expansion of the settler economy through agricultural production as a: "ceaseless expansion" that "progressively eats into Indigenous territory … and curtails the reproduction of Indigenous modes of production. In the event, Indigenous people are either rendered dependent on the introduced economy or reduced to the stock-raids that provide the classic colonial pretext for colonial death-squads" (ibid: 395).

By repositioning Palestine back within the folds of settler colonial studies, this special issue aims to bring these particular dynamics back to the forefront in order to reorient the debate on development around these unavoidable realities of subjugation.

In addition to drawing on settler colonial studies, this issue focuses attention to another structure of dominance, that of race hierarchies. This postcolonial lens exposes both the global "unequal relations" (Kothari, 2002: 38) and the hierarchy between the western subject and the third world other (Baaz, 2005) that are produced and produced through development theories and practices. It thus provides "a powerful critique of 'development' and an increasingly important challenge to dominant ways of apprehending North–South relations" (McEwan 2001:94). However, this special issue goes beyond postcolonial scholarship's overriding focus on discourse analysis, and draws on its insights to analyze material structures of power, their spatial formations and geographies. Though postcolonial studies have been critiqued for its historical focus on discourse analysis, it poses a powerful tool when used to analyze material structures of power, their spatial formations and geographies. In using this approach we also emphasize that "rather than signaling an epochal shift from colonialism to after-colonialism, postcolonialism refers to ways of criticizing the material and discursive legacies of colonialism" (Radcliffe, 1999: 84). This is rather clear in the Palestinian case where settler colonialism has far from cease to exist. Indeed, as Joseph Massad argues, "settler colonialism … present us with different spatialities and temporalities as

regards a diachronic schema of colonialism, then postcolonialism. (Massad in Afzal-Khan, 2007)" Though it is beyond the scope of this introduction to explore these debates, suffice to say that during the last decade postcolonial thinking has been called upon to explore the complexities of development resulting in a productive, robust and material understanding of development paradigms and geographies (see Kappor, 2008; McEwan, 2009; Mitchell, 1995, 2002; Wainwright, 2008).

The importance of using insights from postcolonial studies lies in that it allows us to reposition Palestine within the broader dynamics of the global south, and destabilize the dominant discourses of imperial Europe, including that of 'development,' through which racial and other forms of dominance are exercised. Global theories and practices of development continue to function as a central site where third world peoples are defined and demarcated by a temporal and spatial distance, which consign them to the past, define them as inherently different, and in doing so legitimate their subordination in the present (Kothari, 2011). By using a postcolonial lens to problematize development in this manner, this special issue opens a space to think about what this means for the Palestinian people and considers how racism intersects with, shapes and is re-embedded in and through development interventions and humanitarian operations, and often also mediating how the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle is perceived globally.

If postcolonial studies has opened up development studies to questions of race hierarchies and inequality, no less important is the scholarship breaking down borders between political economy and postcolonial studies. This approach "has enabled deeper integration of critical approaches to race and culture with political economic analyses of class politics and imperialism, as well as more embracing theorizations of violence within capitalist development" (Glassman, 2010:1). As Franz Fanon has shown, the relationship between internal class politics and imperialism imprints itself on and tangles third world liberation struggles (1963). The role of the bourgeoisie and the colonized intellectual elite in invariably acting as conduits for western capital or assimilating imperial discourses problematizes the (untenable) image of a seamless internally homogenous colonized society, uniformly juxtaposed against global imperial and colonial structures of power. Political economy problematizes the economism that underlies development, which has long defined development as economic growth and integration into the global capitalist system. It provides a necessary rejoinder to liberal development economics' "promise of prosperity from an unbridled world market" (McMichael, 2008: 4). Using class analysis, a Marxist inspired political economy exposes the harsh realities of neoliberal restructuring in the third world, pushed by the IFI's, and

reveals the true face of deregulation, privatization, and the unleashing of new predatory forms of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2005: 151). Political economy, thus, disturbs conventional notions of "development" and concepts like "civil society," which conceal class relations (Petras, 1999; Trabulsi, 2011). It gives us the tools to analyzes these processes in terms of class divisions, stratification and trace the new forms immiseration and generalized states of precarity that are being created by neoliberal restructuring. This special issue draws on political economy perspectives to attend to both the everyday micro-politics in the colony, and the broader global economic and political structures and ideologies of capitalism that shape this everyday realm (Mohanty, 2002). The essays in this issue use political economy perspectives to paint a picture of what neoliberalism will mean for a population that is already facing ravages of settler colonialism, while exploring the ways in which development is implicated in these processes.

In bringing these different theoretical perspectives together to unsettle development, this special issue also opens spaces to explore the struggle for alternative forms of development. Historically, the Palestinian liberation struggle produced its own alternative notions of development, discussed below, which were equally rooted in the particularities of the Palestinian struggle, while representing a local insurrection against the global development apparatus, and its framing of non-western societies' as objects on the receiving end of western defined ends. Today, people in the global south and equally in the north continue to struggle to create alternative forms of development that often center on the search for social justice. Whether through urban informal economies in Durban, South Africa which reorganize economic life and "have the potential to provide an alternative to capitalist development, drawing as they do on longstanding social and moral practices" (Willis et al, 2008: 11). Or through indigenous peoples' struggles to restore their inherited collective rights to the land, resisting both bourgeois private property rights and settler colonial strategies of assimilation (Stewart-Harwira, 2005). David Harvey describes these movements as "pointing away from capitalism and privatization towards radically different forms of social and communal organization" (2005: 162). More broadly, neoliberal projects have helped create conditions in which histories, memories, and the meanings of specifically racialized forms of dispossession have erupted in the present, crystallizing around struggles over the control of natural resources. Working in another region of Bolivia, Goodale (2009) shows how marginalized *campesinos* appropriate and vernacularize expectations of modernity. In so doing, he argues, they do not simply become conscripts of the very episteme that would apparently liberate them. Instead, they combine "the grandeur of human rights discourse with indigenist imagery from

selected moments in Bolivian history, gestures toward redistributive modes of production, and direct democracy" (2009: 170). In opening a space to explore these struggles for alternative forms of development, this special issue remains mindful of the embedded, emerging imaginaries that exist in these interstices, and their struggle to create a different politics and a different way of organizing social and economic life.

BRINGING BACK HISTORY, POWER AND POLITICS

In bringing these theoretical approaches together, this special issue recovers and explores some of the intersections between the settler colonial rational and neoliberal logics that inform development in Palestine, as well as the how this works to gradually erode the possibilities for imagining national liberation and crafting people centered development strategies. The papers as a whole develop a number of crucial arguments about the prevalent and fundamental contradictions that infuse the material and symbolic aspects of development and the impossibilities of the current model to challenge settler colonialism, which are summarized herein.

First, the papers contest the recurrent exceptionalism that frames Palestine, in both scholarly and popular accounts, which attempt to abstract development from its global and regional setting. Instead, they provide a dialectical reading of development that situates it in broader historical and structural forces, as well as global and regional power dynamics, and examines how these relationships and tensions shape the present condition of Palestine. The papers underscore thus the relevance of bringing history back in order to understand the ideological context in which development takes place, while attending to the macro-global structures and forces that shape everyday life. This approach opens up the possibility of taking into account the growing inequalities and uneven development geographies resulting from the simultaneous consolidation of predatory forms of global capitalism and the inexorable territorial desire of Zionist settler colonialism.

Part of ending the claims of exceptionalism that set Palestine apart from the pervasive development logics in the global south is recognizing the indispensability of settler colonialism as an interpretative framework that illuminates the specificities of this encounter. This means examining the ongoing development policies in Palestine in relation to cases such as South Africa, North America and French-Algeria, rather than contemporary European liberal democracies to which Israel seeks comparison, and aligning Palestine scholarship with indigenous and native studies (see Collins, 2011; Jabary Salamanca et al, 2012).

This literature underscores the eliminatory, and therefore, genocidal logics of settler colonialism (Abdel-Jawad, 1998; Wolfe, 2006; Shaw, 2010). One clearly sees the way this is at stake in the Palestine today where Zionist settler colonialism domination is increasingly exercised at "the level of life" (Foucault, 1990: 137), producing unlivable conditions and abject ghettos like Gaza (UN Country Team, 2012). The ominous revelation that the Israeli government has been calculating the minimum calorie intact needed to keep the Palestinians in Gaza at the verge of starvation – and then restricting import levels well below these levels – is a stark manifestation of this logic (Hass, 2012; Seikaly, 2012). The studies in this special issue explore how these settler colonial logics shape and are in turn shaped by development interventions in Palestine; they explore how the logics of elimination are implemented through separate (and unequal) development strategies that mirror apartheid South Africa and go far beyond it, and often concealed behind the depoliticizing nature of humanitarian aid.

Ending the exceptionalism surrounding Palestine also means recognizing that Israeli settler colonialism is not detached from the global economic and political structures of power, particularly global capitalism. As indicated from the outset, neoliberalism, as an ideology that revolve around expanding free market capitalism, removing protections on labor, cutting social welfare programmes and reducing the role of the state, the neoliberal doctrine was an intrinsic part of the development apparatus that was institutionalized with Oslo. Indeed, contrary to critical analyses that tend to focus solely on the political aspects of the struggle, the political transition that lead to the Oslo accords must be understood in relation to the simultaneous neoliberal restructuring of the Israeli economy and the broader regional and global economic and political liberalization of the 1990s (see Shafir and Peled, 2000; Samara, 2000, 2001; Honing-Parnass and Haddad, 2007; Clarno, 2009).

This special issue therefore looks at what these overlapping capitalist and settler colonial structures of power have translated into intersecting and interlocking forms of domination. The Oslo process institutionalized a new policy shape where the native administration –the "Palestinian National Authority"– is just one actor shaping "national" policies, while a coalition of 'trustees' –including donors, international organizations, international financial institutions (IFIs)—and their political interests are increasingly determining Palestinian policies (Giacaman et al, 1995). In this sense, the PA emerged as a neoliberal laboratory designed from scratch by the policies and prescriptions of globalizing institutions under a refashioning settler colonial project.[82] These influences became clearer with Salam Fayyad's further neoliberalization drive laid out in

[82] Adel Samara (2001) notes however that current ideological economic thinking are bitter fruit of a larger history of PLO liberal policies.

the Palestinian Reform Development Plan (PRDP) 2008-2010. The PRDP's headline reform, it's plans to reduce the "wage bill" (PNA, 2007: 14) has been described by Adam Hanieh as "probably the harshest attack on any public sector in the Middle East in recent history" (quoted in Khalidi and Samour, 2011: 13). Following the prescriptions of the World Bank and other international development agencies[83], ending 'net lending' and the 'culture of non-payment', the commodification of essential services –such as electricity and water— transferred to the hands of the private sector have been the trademarks of this neoliberal drive against notions of social entitlements and the commons in the colony (Maan, 2012). Indeed, under this haze, the PA's free market capitalist policies, unable to secure a state to protect capital's interests, have to a large extent substituted strategies of economic resistance for private enrichment, in ways that reinforce dependency on the colonial economy and external actors.

The essays in this special issue explore how overlapping settler colonial and neoliberal capitalist modes of dominance are becoming intertwined and transforming everyday life in Palestine. In his study, Hanieh traces the alarming rate at which debt is increasing in the occupied territories, promoting new individual self-interests and forms of precarity that erode collective solidarity and struggle. His analysis echoes Harvey's description of the onset of a danger "promotion of levels of debt incumbency that reduce whole populations, even in the advanced capitalist countries, to debt peonage" (2005: 147). As neoliberal capitalism introduces a new ruthless profit-making market rationality, under which "everything is either for sale or plundered for profit" (Giroux, 2005:1), the essays in this issue look what this assault means on the Palestinian national struggle, in terms of subjectivities and the undermining of socio-political and collective strategies of resistance, and consider how resistance to neoliberal capitalism and settler colonialism can be re-linked together, as explored by Hanieh, Haddad, Kuttab and other contributions in this issue.

A second argument advanced by the contributions to this issue is that the current inter/national development model internalizes, sustains and reinforces the structures of power, dependency and hegemonies through which settler colonialism is exercised and reproduced. The essays trace how this has contributed to introducing a critical shift from the PLO's anti-colonial tradition of struggle to overturn structures of colonial dominance to working within oppression. The development apparatus in the occupied territories, as elsewhere, conceives and frames development as a technical intervention. In its unwillingness to

[83] The PRDP was "generated in conjunction with the World Bank, the British Department for International Development (DFID) and other international development agencies" (STW, 2008: 7).

contend with the material realities of power that underlie and confine development operations, it produces decontextualized spatial and temporal formations of development that are disconnected from and often render the power that settler colonialism exercises over the Palestinian people invisible. The papers in this issue unsettle these ahistorical, linear trajectories of development by tracking the way these "neutral" interventions often work alongside, conceal, reinforce, or integrate and rearrange the colonized with settler colonial capillary forms of power, whether spatial formations of racialized dominance, segregated infrastructure, sequestered ghettos, logics of dispossession or structures that maintain their economic subordination of the colonized population.

In doing so, the studies in this issue shed new light on the intended and unintended "political effects" of development interventions (Ferguson, 1994: 20), and their colonizing logics. In his seminal study, Ferguson describes the development apparatus as an "anti-politics machine" that reinforces and expands "the exercise of bureaucratic state power" (ibid: 255, 21). Studies by Timothy Mitchell and others echo Ferguson critique, and show how these technocratic and depoliticizing perspectives exclude power relations (see Mitchell, 2002; Li**,** 2007). The contributions in this issue provide fresh insights on how this process works, and point to the way the development apparatus in Palestine has contributed to marginalizing if not outright displacing the political impetus to dismantle a system of power and dominance, and has played a role in integrating the colonized into the prevailing structures of colonial power.

From the outset of the Oslo process the international development assistance to the Palestinian people adopted a post-conflict lens that dissociated Zionist settler colonialism's system of subjugation from development and the "state-building" process, while being conditioned by the logics of settler colonialism. This dominant conception of development contributed to shifting the focus and activities of NGO projects and social movements towards the "civic," replacing the "national" and the "political" (Hanafi and Tabar, 2003). This in turn played a role in disconnecting women's organizations and other social movements from the national struggle (Hammami and Kuttab, 1999). These essays look at the more recent ways and forms through which the dominant conception of development has played a role in re-embedding or incorporating Palestinians into prevailing settler colonial structures of dominance. Whether if it's in the way the World Bank's programmes have integrated the structures of the colonial occupation into Palestinian development, as Hanieh demonstrates. Or through donor democracy programmes, which have co-opted and contained the Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation within the

institutional regime of the PA, to the exclusion of the vast majority of Palestinian people, as Leila Farsakh argues in her study.

In writing contra Oslo, and its attempts to settle the Palestinian question by dividing up and fragmenting the Palestinian native inhabitants, the research in this issue develops a third argument. That is, the necessity of reaffirming the integrity of the Palestinian people as a single totality within their differentiated political locations, whether within the 1967 occupied territories, inside 1948 occupied Palestine and in the diaspora. These essays bring the segments of the Palestinian people that were excluded by Oslo, namely the Palestinian community inside 1948 and the refugees in the diaspora back into view. The imperative here is not only political, but also and crucially an analytical one, for all Palestinians, including refugees, are ultimately subjected in various ways to the violence of Zionist settler colonialism.

The Oslo process, and its accompanying discourses and formations of development, furthered the Zionist goal of fragmenting the Palestinian people. As Haddad argues in this issue, the intertwining logics of neoliberalism and the Oslo state-building project intended from the outset to domesticate the Palestinian question according to Israeli colonial and American imperial plans for a “new Middle East.” Moreover, as Eid rightfully maintains Oslo also sought to produce a “new consciousness” among the oppressed to cement this new regional order (2009). As a discursive regime, the Oslo accords recolonized the question of Palestine according to a colonial schematization of history and time, in an effort to erase the original violence of the 1948 dispossession, and therefore exclude the legitimate right of the Palestinians return to their homes and lands from which they were expelled by the Zionist movement (Pappe, 2002). In trying to reduce the question to Israel’s military occupation over the West Bank and Gaza, Oslo divided and fragmented the Palestinians. It excluded the vast majority of the Palestinians (over 7 million refugees in exile and 1.5 million Palestinian citizens of Israel) from this political process, which also resulted in their exclusion from political programme of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (Gassner, 2000).

The contributions in this journal unsettle Zionist settler colonialism’s ongoing efforts to fragment the Palestinian people. These essays retrace the interconnections between the experiences of the Palestinian people as a whole, and their encounters with development. The Palestinian people’s suffocating confinement inside “holding pens” (Cook, 2008) within the occupied territories, or their ghettoization within crowded, under serviced villages inside Israel where the majority are condemned to poverty, reflect Zionist settler colonialism persistent plan to slowly ethnically cleanse the Palestinians from the entirety of their homeland.

Today Israel continues to work towards a “quiet transfer” of the Palestinians from Israel (Pappe, 2011: 4) and a “gradual ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians…on both sides of today’s Green Line” (Cook, 2008: 8).

This issue therefore breaks down the false division between the colonial realities inside 1948 occupied Palestine and the 1967 occupied territories, exploring the different forms through which the same settler colonial logics are proceeding in both territories. Raja Khalidi’s work shows how settler colonial logic of dispossession plays out within the economic realm inside Israel. He demonstrates that behind the colonial state’s calls for ‘developing the Arab sector’: “Israeli policy objectives continue in the same vein: they target what is left of Palestinian citizens’ resources, and they exploit its dependency in order to carry out construction of the Zionist economy… If we examine the historical record of the Palestinian economic experience in Israel and its relation to the territories occupied in 1967… we find that, at worst, they smother and at best, they ignore or neglect Palestinian developmental interests” (Khalidi, 2012: 2).

In her study Nahla Abdo takes a closer look at these processes in relation to gender and race. She examines how separate development is the site where colonial strategies of enclosure, economic and political segregation and exclusion, target and are inscribed on native bodies.

Similarly, the studies in this special issue also examine Palestinian refugees’ own developmental encounters through the lens of their complicated relationship to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) –the humanitarian agency that was established to oversee Palestine refugees’ basic needs and administer the camps. Today, through the services it provides to over 5 million Palestinian refugees, and through its institutional memory that helps record their dispossession (Farah, 2010), UNRWA is vital not only Palestinian refugees’ well-being, but is crucial for their struggle to return. However, UNRWA also has an uneasy relationship to rights of the Palestinian refugees (Tabar, 2012).[84]

As a “unique international humanitarian model” (Farah, 2010), UNRWA reflects the international community’s ambivalence towards Palestine refugees and the organization’s tangled relationship to western states, who not only fund the organization, but also played a central role in defining its mandate. Randa Farah highlights the influence that the

[84] When UNRWA was setup by the UN General Assembly in 1949, it was assigned with a limited mandate to provide Palestinian refugees with humanitarian relief. This is in contrast to the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), which had been set up a year earlier was mandate to oversee a search for durable solutions, including facilitating their right to repatriation, but was effectively disbanded for political reasons.

Americans and the British initially exerted over the agency, and their efforts to bring UNRWA's operation in line with the "American vision of "development and resettlement" as the solution for Palestinian refugees" (2012: 2). Yet, their attempts to use development as a tool for economic integration and resettlement in the Arab world failed "for neither the refugees nor the Arab host governments were willing to compromise on the Palestinian right of return" (ibid: 3). UNRWA at times ambivalent relationship to Palestinian refugees' rights also directs our attention to the contradictions and struggles taking place both within and outside the bureaucratic organization, as refugees and actors within the agency try to reclaim the organization and strengthen its relationship to the struggle for Palestinian rights. Essays in this issue explore how development is often the field where these struggles are played out.

Fourth and finally, the research in this issue highlights how global discourses and practices of development have played a role in marginalizing radical politics and liberatory struggles in the global south and in Palestine more specifically. Fawwaz Traboulsi has argued that western development discourses are tied to a colonizing liberal imperial discourse that has reshaped the terrain and forms through which politics in the third world is conducted. He argues that these development discourses have not only collapsed society into a depoliticizing "state/civil society" binary, but he suggests that NGOs have promoted a hegemonic fragmented, post-modern vision of society that isolates class, women's and other struggles from one another (2011: 15-16). These political struggles are repackaged and framed in liberal micro-narratives, such that "women's rights", "sustainable development" and "human rights" are no longer understand as situated within a single integrated system of power (ibid: 16). James Petras echoes this critique and argues that NGOs have served the interests of imperialism by replacing a critical consciousness of the "the nature of imperialism, class basis of neoliberalism (and) class struggle" NGOs have exerted hegemonic influence in discussing, "the poor," "excluded," "gender discrimination," while concealing "the social system that produces these conditions" (1999). In doing so, he argues that NGOs represent a conservative force that goes along with "international and national structures of power" (ibid). Yet, it is crucial to recognize that this system of power is not unidirectional. This hegemonic framework and its depoliticization of politics are currently being contested. In documenting emerging grassroots thinking on alternatives to mainstream development, the studies in this issue stress the importance of rearticulating "development as struggle," as Hanieh suggests, and widening the notion of struggle to encompass multi-layered forms of resistance, including creating counter-hegemonies to the above liberal imperial framework.

The essays in this issue make a compelling and urgent call to recover the idea of liberation as the driving force of national development policies. They explore the impact that development's uneasy and antagonistic relationship to radical, liberatory politics has had on the Palestinian national liberation struggle and vice versa. In returning to the imperatives of the national liberation project, this set of essays recognizes what Fanon calls 'the trials and tribulations of national consciousness,' and the differentiated gendered and classed locations and interests that mediate and shape the national project. Fanon's entire theorization of the national liberation project rests on the possibility of anti-colonial nationalism transforming itself into what he describes as a new internationalism, and a new humanism, which also strives for a global redistribution of wealth (1963: 143-144). Yet, this potentiality is fraught with internal contradictions and paradoxes. Not only is it the case that the colonized intellectual often assimilates the "colonizer's culture" (ibid: 158-159). But, as Fanon forcefully maintains the weakness of national consciousness and its diminished liberatory potentialities is often due to the self-interests and the "apathy of the national bourgeoisie" which act as an agent "conveyor belt for (global) capitalism" and mediate new forms subordination (ibid: 98, 100-101). These tensions, antagonisms and potentialities are an inherent part of the struggle for liberation, and also frame indigenous attempts to fashion alternative forms of development.

The issue opens up a space to think about such popular and indigenous struggles for alternative forms of development. In looking beyond dominant paradigms it is useful to briefly look back at how Palestinians historically re-defined development in the course of the liberation struggle. Beyond the iconic image of the *intifada* (uprising) of 1987 as the uprising of 'the children of the stones', the 1970-80's gave birth to a popular people's struggle for liberation, which linked the struggle against settler colonialism to struggles against capitalism and patriarchal domination. The popular mass-based mobilizing that began in the early 1970's (Taraki, 1989) sought in a two-fold manner to delink from the structures of direct settler colonial rule – taxation, municipal services (or lack thereof) repression of agriculture, economic dependency, etc. – and replace them with popular alternatives, people centered attempts to rebuild roads, reclaim the land, build a popular inward oriented economy (Samara, 2005), and informal popular education. This movement both redefined development as a praxis that advances the national struggle, and creatively fashioned its own indigenous popular forms of development, such as cooperatives, which reorganized economic life according to the principle of equality, and thus sought to provide a more just order to capitalist exploitation and patriarchal domination. In creating spaces to reflect on such struggles, this special

issue thus recognizes the need to "do justice to the social imaginaries of Third World peoples without first reconstructing them in our terms" (Tucker, 1999: 23). As Linda Tabar's study in this journal demonstrates, insurgent knowledges and indigenous alternative concepts of development continue to circulate globally, and are embraced by third world peoples in their local struggles.

KEY ANALYTICAL THEMES

In making these overarching arguments and by proposing the above theoretical and methodological framework, this special issue hopes to provide a nuanced and necessarily critical perspective on the existing articulations between settler colonialism, neoliberal development and liberation in the Palestinian context. The authors focus on several key components and aspects of development, which we have grouped into three analytical, around which this special issue is organized: (a) *unsettling development,* which brings both history and global structures and ideologies that frame development back into perspective, (b) *development interventions*, which problematizes the ways development get caught up into and consolidates the existing relations of power, and (c) *liberation and indigenous development*, which begins to explores sites and ways to reconnect development to the liberation struggle. In what follows we give a full account of each contribution.

Unsettling development

The first theme, *Unsettling Development*, examines how the existing development trajectory in Palestine is shaped and produced, both historically and in its contemporary formations, in relation to settler colonialism and global capitalism. In doing so this section aims to rethinking development theory and practice in ways that consider the Palestinian case in its larger regional and global context, while at the same time exposing the paradoxes and impossibilities of the current development model. The papers in this section include a critique of the contradictions and deceptive spatial, temporal and political imaginary endorsed by Oslo and how this infuses development practice today; a historical reading of the links between development, nationalism and anti-colonial thought in the Palestinian struggle; and finally a contribution around the necessity to acknowledge power relations in what otherwise is often presented as a neutral, technocratic and apolitical development enterprise.

Samia al-Botmeh's paper provides a historical survey of the different political economy frameworks that Palestinians have used to define, problematize and rearticulate the notion of "development" under settler colonialism, tracing this back to the 1900's, when Palestinian

indigenous thinkers initially began grappling with these issues. Her study sheds new light on how Palestinian economics and intellectuals, linked to the Palestinian liberation movement, have theorized economic development over time. Excavating the radical economic theories that were prevalent in the movement in the 1970's, she situates these ideas within the broader critical economic theories at the time, and looks at how these radical theories were eventually marginalized by the rise of the neoliberal orthodoxy in the 1990's.

In her contribution, Nithya Nagarajan unravels the dominant development paradigm that underpins international development assistance to the Palestinians today. She argues that this development paradigm is framed by the Post-Washington Consensus and driven by donor political agendas, and their accommodation to the imperatives of Zionist settler colonialism, its security logics and its territorial expansionism. The essay examines how donors have promoted neoliberal forms of development that ultimately seek to replace politics with an economic-centric institutional focus, regardless of its effects on the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle.

Adam Hanieh's study suggests that the dominant development paradigm that accompanied Oslo has been unable and refused to recognize and confront the nature of the Zionism settler colonialism, and its economic and political modes of domination. Arguing that this development framework has concealed, and therefore, reinforced settler colonial structures of power and control, he demonstrates how the World Bank's programmes have integrated the structures of the colonial occupation into Palestinian development. His paper also explores the double way neoliberalism proceeds by increasing inequality, widening the class divide, on the one hand, while promoting individualism, and overburdening people with debt, on the other, thus eroding collective class based or national solidarity. Hanieh's paper re-conceptualizes "development as struggle" and uses this as a framework to articulate an alternative development strategy that contests colonial fragmentation and economic domination.

These papers set the ground for the interventions that follow. By reexamining the genealogy of anti-colonial thought, they recover some of the intellectual and political sites that provided fertile ground for the formulation of alternative, oppositional notions of development. The essays also complicate our understanding of mainstream development by showing how contemporary dominant development practices and interventions are increasingly shaped by and reinforce neoliberalism, its refashioning of politics, society and the individual in the image of the market. Finally, by boldly proposing the idea of "development of struggle," the papers create a framework within which to re-imagine

alternative formations and discourses of development, within and beyond the hegemonic development apparatus.

Development interventions

The second theme, *development interventions*, investigates the ways in which inter/national development policy systematically ignores the political realities on the ground contributing, sometimes unwittingly but often willfully, to consolidate ill-fated socio-political, economic and spatial processes that sustain and exacerbate the status quo in detriment of Palestinian rights. At the same time it exposes how the current development model disempowers and depoliticizes Palestinians while inducing growing levels of inequality and dependency. The papers in this section use different and cross-border Palestinian sites –from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River and beyond in the diaspora—to expose the ways development, in its material and symbolic forms, contribute to the fragmentation of the Palestinian people. And in doing so they contribute to re-unifying and recovering some sense of the Palestinian body politic. Through exposing and discussing the ways development is conceived, negotiated, implemented, and contested, the essays in this section tell us a great deal about development theory and practice in the Palestinian context.

The contribution by Nahla Abdo explores the differential ways Palestinian women in Israel are targeted and intervened by the Zionist settler state in the 1948 occupied territories according to the racist logic of separate and unequal development. Focusing on the dynamics of the Palestinian Arab economy in Israel, Abdo challenges the overwhelming ethnic-based approaches prevalent in analysing the state of Israel, its policies towards its Palestinian citizens, and its economic structure. She argues that these approaches are fundamentally flawed and explains how they fail to account for the physical separation between the Israeli market(s): between a primary market for Jews and a secondary one for Arabs. This ‘Arab market’, or what Abdo refers to as an ‘Apartheid market’, is largely an under-developed service provider where an overwhelming majority of Arab women find themselves employed. To conclude, the paper advances an alternative approach to Israel’s political economy: one that recognizes the racialized structure of the Israeli state and acknowledges its settler colonial nature.

Examining USAID education programs, Eileen Kuttab’s study explores how development projects are entangled with and advance the construction of neoliberal subjectivities. In doing so Kuttab shows how neoliberalism locks people into capitalism by “forging new identities” and promoting forms of individualization that “are linked to new forms of governance, often mobilized around discourses of ‘empowerment’

and 'autonomy'" (Willis et al, 2008: 3). The essay raises important questions about the relationship between development, education and neoliberalism. For instances, how are development projects complicit in neoliberalism's refashioning and replacement of anti-colonial nationalist subjectivities with neoliberal selves, and what does this entail in terms of contesting the violence of the market and that of settler dispossession and displacement? And also, how are education projects inextricably intertwined with neoliberal's restructuring of the relationship between the state-market-society? Or in what ways the reconstitution of the political and its construction of a depoliticized civil society attempt to thwart contestation of market and other forms of domination?

Omar Jabary Salamanca takes road infrastructure as an entry point to explore the perverse and racialized spatialities of development in the West Bank. Using the case of the 'fabric of life', a dedicated Palestinian network of segregated roads designed by Israel and mostly funded by USAID, the paper explores how inter/national development intervention has been instrumentalized to address Israeli interests in ways that internalize, obscure, and normalize the power asymmetries and colonial imperatives of military occupation. As Jabary Salamanca argues, colonialism outsources development to effectively support an ongoing process of dispossession. Ultimately, the paper draws attention to the importance of making visible the layered assemblage of discourses, materials, practices, and actors that constitute fabric of life roads. In doing so, we can begin to understand how these networks are an outcome and a means of settler colonialism, on the one hand, and a mirror of the technocratic and depoliticizing effects of forms of development and statehood that antepose rituals of state building and economic performance to challenging the settler colonial present, on the other.

The paper by Nell Gabiam focuses on UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)'s recent attempt to engage in participatory development in Palestinian refugee camps. She specifically investigates UNRWA's experimentation with participatory development and their efforts to apply its vision of development to the space of the Palestinian refugee camp. The paper presents innovative ethnographic research conducted on the Neirab Rehabilitation Project, an UNRWA-sponsored "participatory development" project-taking place in the Palestinian refugee camps of Neirab and Ein el Tal in northern Syria. Gabiam argues that the multiple and, at times, contradictory interests that permeate UNRWA, enable or hinder the notion of community empowerment through development in Palestinian refugee camps.

Looking at UNRWA from a different lens, Mezna Qato provides a historical analysis of the United Nations' educational programs for Palestinian refugees in Jordan. The paper explores the logics and limitations of emergency relief and the role of international donors and the host state in attempting to steer this relief. Qato's essay highlights two crucial aspects defining the constraints and underpinning logics of development aid to Palestinian refugees. Firstly, UNRWA's answerability to host countries, its reliance on foreign donor states, and its own emergency mandate, meant that its priorities were often at odds with that of those under its care. And secondly, how UNRWA's emergency mandate eventually extended into schemes of re-settlement and economic integration aimed at buttressing the economy of Jordan through remittances and therefore to pulling refugees away from their political demands. The paper explores how United Nations –both UNRWA and UNESCO—'s education programs were instrumentalized to support these logics, and in doing so worked against the political and national rights of refugees. It examines the ways Palestinians negotiated and tried to redefine this education system and the curriculum to which the refugees became subjected. Ultimately, and contrary to the rights configured for them by the post WW-II humanitarian order, Qato argues that emergence of UNRWA's educational system was aimed at maintaining refugees as emergency wards whose temporary status is not cancelled as the result of a solution to their dispersion but their resettlement elsewhere.

Liberation and indigenous development

Finally, *Liberation and Indigenous Development*, critically examines the effects of neoliberalism, humanitarianism, and donor (de-)democratization programmes on the Palestinian people and their struggle. It traces Palestinian resistance to the way these forces interlock with settler colonialism, and maps some of the emerging oppositional practices on the ground. These essays participate in defining alternatives, and give concrete form to the embedded social imaginaries that are trying to re-link development to the Palestinian struggle for liberation. In doing so, this set of essays contribute new perspectives to the ongoing debate on the impact of aid and dominant development paradigms, and widen the possibilities for Palestinians to look beyond Oslo and reconstitute the Palestinian national liberation movement.

In his contribution Toufic Haddad traces the interwoven nature of neoliberalism and the Oslo state-building project back to Zionist and US imperial plans to open up the markets in the Middle East under the dominance of Israeli colonial capitalism, while normalizing Zionism. He

argues that for western governments and IFIs “state building was seen as a way to manage and pacify the Palestinian national liberation demands without fulfilling them” (p.10). He suggests, therefore, that neoliberalism has been connected to deepening overlapping forms of political and economic domination: both the pacification of the “rebellious Palestinian question (economically, and militarily if need be, via Israel) and allowing for “business as usual” throughout the rest of the Arab world” (p.12). Haddad examines neoliberalism’s destructive impact on Palestinian national liberation struggle, and sketches out what an alternative national development paradigm would look like.

The paper by Leila Farsakh reminds us of the centrality of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its role providing an inclusive national democratic system that represented all of the Palestinian people. Destabilizing the Oslo narrative, she brings the democratic structures of the national liberation movement that have been eclipsed by the PA back into visibility, and exposes the way donor programs have de-democratized the Palestinian people. She argues that these programs have co-opted and contained the Palestinians in the occupied territories within the institutional regime of the PA, to the exclusion of the vast majority of Palestinians, and have worked to replace collective political life with individual relationships to the authority. Looking beyond these repressive development materialities, she reflects on some of the requirements for rebuilding a national democratic space that includes all of the Palestinian people, inside and outside of 1948 and 1967 occupied Palestine.

Linda Tabar’s paper ties together and explores the pacifying nature of humanitarian assistance, focusing on international food aid to the Palestinians, with the situated modalities of Zionist settler colonial technologies of violence and oppression. She argues that as native bodes are becoming more and more emaciated, humanitarian interventions are produce order and managing these conditions, and pacify anti-colonial agency, as opposed to supporting the colonized struggle for liberation and justice. She looks at how grassroots actors are creating their own alternatives to food aid by linking resistance to the colonization of land, to the struggle to develop Palestinian local agricultural production, and suggests this is prefiguring a model for the national movement as a whole. The paper argues for the need to replace humanitarianism with solidarity with people’s struggles against capitalism, settler colonialism and imperialism in the global south.

These studies encourage us to think within and beyond dominant development discourses, liberal hegemonies and the growing nexus between development and security (Cramer, 2012). The studies converge around the idea of reclaiming overlapping resistance to

structures of domination as necessarily part of development under colonialism, and retrieving the political, from bureaucratic development interventions. They create spaces to radically rethink Palestinian development in relationship to ending security collaboration between the PA and Zionist settler colonialism, and resisting global capitalism. They re-imagine development as a creative refashioning of an inclusive national democratic system for all of the Palestinian people that necessarily exceeds technical development exercises and requires a political process of rebuilding unions, political parties and a popular movement from the bottom-up. The papers also reclaim solidarity as based on shared political principles, and shared anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist politics, as a rejoined and corrective to global development apparatus, that need to take place within and beyond development.

CONCLUSION

This special issue reflects a particular moment where political forces and critical currents of thought, both internally in all of Palestine and externally in the diaspora and beyond, are fracturing the Oslo development hegemony in its economic, social, political and spatial guises. As such, the contributions to this issue provide new empirical insights and theoretical reflections that thoroughly problematize the material and discursive foundations of development in Palestine. At a moment when the popular Arab uprisings have ruptured dominant frameworks of thought, including global development discourses, and opened up new possibilities for anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-colonial struggles in the region, this special issue seeks to radically call into question the Oslo neoliberal development experiment in Palestine, and move political and intellectual discussions beyond the Oslo colonial order.

Whereas depictions of Palestine –mainly by economists, mainstream political scientists and development policy makers more broadly—have often turned development into an empty signifier, a self-contained category separate from the global and regional context and forces that shape it, and of which it is an integral part, in this introduction we argue for a nuanced and situated analyses that takes into consideration the entangled and complex relationship between settler colonialism, neoliberal development, and anti-colonial struggle. We suggest that bringing power, politics, and history back into a reading of development helps to unsettle existing development approaches in Palestine. In this respect the issue highlights and challenges four crucial points: the recurrent exceptionalism that frames Palestine and ignores how the existing development trajectory in Palestine is shaped and produced in relation to settler colonialism and global capitalism; a development

rational that is intrinsically geared towards internalizing, obscuring and reinforcing structures of power and dependency; the gradual fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic; and the persistent marginalization of liberatory politics and resistance from development. In doing so, the papers in this issue make an important contribution to the process of unsettling traditional development approaches that came along Oslo and also to envisaging alternatives that bring Palestinian communities back together and contribute to reconsolidating a shared political national imaginary.

In committing to a critical colonial and political economy analytical standpoint, we hope that this compilation of essays, by no means exhaustive, might help in contributing to an understanding of the complex development phenomena under examination. A fundamental challenge of the Palestinian present conjuncture is to grasp how the tensions and contradictions of development are being produced and reproduced in practice, if we are to enable a different thinking and opening up spaces of oppositional indigenous forms of development that support alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and support national liberation. Such an alignment would expand the tools available to Palestinians, the solidarity movement that supports it, and reconnect this struggle to its own history of anti-colonial internationalism. At its core, this internationalist approach asserts that the Palestinian struggle against Zionist settler colonialism can only be won when it is embedded within, and empowered by, broader struggles – all anti-imperial, all anti-racist, feminist, to make another world possible (Jabary et al, 2011).

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