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DOI:

[10.1080/24694452.2021.2019572](https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2021.2019572)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Citation for published version (APA):

Griffiths, M., & Brooks, A. (2022). A relational comparison: The gendered effects of cross-border work in Palestine within a global frame. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 112(6), 1761-1776. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2021.2019572>

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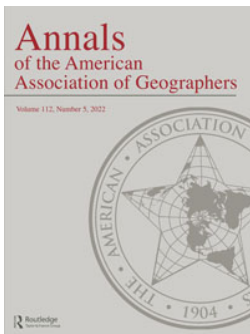
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To cite this article: Mark Griffiths & Andrew Brooks (2022): A Relational Comparison: The Gendered Effects of Cross-Border Work in Palestine within a Global Frame, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, DOI: [10.1080/24694452.2021.2019572](https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2021.2019572)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2021.2019572>



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Published online: 04 Apr 2022.



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A Relational Comparison: The Gendered Effects of Cross-Border Work in Palestine within a Global Frame

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This article sets the gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor in Palestine within a global frame of uneven development. Drawing on fieldwork close to Checkpoint 300, between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, we first provide an account that centers Palestinian women's social reproduction as coconstitutive of male cross-border employment in the Israeli economy. Discussion then moves to consider gendered work in apartheid-era South Africa with the intention not to draw analogies but to explore how labor articulation situated South Africa within the power geometries of globalization. Returning with these analytical tools, we undertake a relational comparison to reconsider the cross-border as a global space. Cutting-edge security technologies and migrants from Thailand are some of the new objects, ideas, and people that coalesce and reshape Palestinian domestic life. The gendered effects of social reproduction are thus connected to both Israel's military occupation and its location within global capitalism. The article makes three key contributions by (1) foregrounding women in discussion of cross-border labor, (2) explicating state–global relations in regimes of segregation, and (3) mobilizing relational comparison as a tool for understanding local exploitation within global structures. *Key Words:* *apartheid, articulation, Palestine, relational comparison, segregation.*

The objective of this article is to better understand the gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor in occupied Palestine within a global frame of interlinked and uneven development. Specifically, we focus on labor relations that form around checkpoints in Israel's Separation Wall and consider the effects for women of both region-specific racial segregation and the global logics of colonial and capitalist accumulation. To approach this task, we draw on experiences of women from late apartheid-era South Africa (1970–1986). The intention is not, however, to add to the large body of work that draws analogies between the two regimes of segregation (e.g., Pappé 2015; Soske and Jacobs 2015; Peteet 2016; Turner 2019); we instead explore how critical interventions around the concept of labor articulation that situated South Africa within global capitalism (Wolpe 1972; Hall 1980; Bozzoli 1983; Murray 1987), allied with more recent scholarship on the gendered geographies of work (Gibson-Graham 1996; Bair 2010; Bhattacharya 2017), can provide theoretical insight into the contemporary

case of Palestine–Israel. We thus engage in a work of “relational comparison” (Hart 2006, 2018; Brooks and Herrick 2019) of two territories whose commonalities (and differences) are set within not only local infrastructures of division (e.g., the Wall, Bantustans, closure, checkpoints) but also broader global processes of segregation and labor exploitation (see also Clarno 2017). Articulation, we demonstrate, draws attention to the gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor where women are burdened with a social reproduction deficit in the household (Wolpe 1972; Evans 2013). In South Africa this often meant an added reliance on women's subsistence farming in Bantustans and townships; in Palestine the deficit increases women's share of domestic labor. A key argument we make is that neither burden can be solely attributed to apartheid or Zionist ideology—each rests on complicit economic and political actors exogenous to the respective segregationist regimes. Comparison conceived this way—as analysis of differentiated relations to a global “whole”—enables an understanding

of the gendered dynamics of low-wage, cross-border labor in Palestine as an effect of both Israel's military occupation and its embrace of neoliberal policies within global capitalism (Hart 2006; Clarno 2017).

Although there are few pairs of territories distant in time and space that have been compared as often as apartheid-era South Africa and occupied Palestine, our argument diverges from important existing work by setting aside the question of "history is repeating itself"; for example, in the form of pass laws (Soni 2018), gendered division of labor (Löwstedt 2015), and segregated infrastructures (Grunebaum 2015). The move is toward a substantively different understanding of the coconstituencies of capitalism–neoliberalism and colonialism–apartheid at the sites of segregation in which gender roles are formed. This enables, crucially, a mode of comparison focused on the dynamics of cross-border work and the exploitation of articulated labor in relation to a larger whole: capitalism at a global scale (Hart 2002). The work of this article specifically, then, is to take existing knowledge of the gendered effects of cross-border labor in Palestine as a localized site (e.g., Griffiths and Repo 2020, 2021) and bring it into contact with the broader geographies of colonial capitalism that are captured, for instance, in recently elaborated notions of "settler capitalism" (Speed 2017) and "neoliberal apartheid" (Clarno 2017; Englert 2020). The research presented here thus makes three key contributions to existing geographical scholarship: (1) a foregrounding of the lives of women and social reproduction in low-wage, cross-border labor systems; (2) an interrogation of the scalar relationship between household experiences, state regimes of segregation, and global flows of labor and capital; and (3) a mobilization of relational comparison as an approach for understanding local exploitation within global structures. We discuss these three main contributions in the concluding section of the article.

The article proceeds in four sections. To foreground the lives of women within cross-border labor relations, we open with firsthand accounts from fieldwork conducted in the village of Al-Walaja close to Checkpoint 300, a major point of passage for West Bank Palestinians who work in East Jerusalem and Israel (see Griffiths and Repo 2018, 2020, 2021; Rijke and Minca 2018, 2019). In the second section we turn to late apartheid-era South

Africa (1970–1986), drawing on the idea of articulation and evidence from archival sources to build an understanding of women's lives in low-wage, cross-border contexts. The third section is focused on comparison to sketch a theoretical framework for putting together two geographically and historically disparate territories within a single global frame (Hart 2020). By presenting theoretical discussion after empirical material, our approach is purposively "retroductive" in that it foregrounds the lives of Palestinian women and allows their accounts (or "data") to clearly inform theorizations (see Davies and Brooks 2021) of the integral role domestic labor plays in the functioning of capitalism (Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2004; Katz, Marston, and Mitchell 2015; Mezzadri 2021). The turn to articulation and relational comparison followed consideration of accounts from Palestine and their contingencies with prior work on apartheid in South Africa that linked marginalized women to global-scale economic neoliberalization (Wolpe 1972; Bozzoli 1983; Murray 1987; Evans 2013). The fourth section discusses the case from Palestine through this theoretical framework and presents a new perspective on labor and checkpoints that attends to both military occupation and neoliberalism (insofar as the two can be separated). We conclude with explication of the main contributions of the article and reflection on the politics of the geography presented here: The Israeli state and its military do not escape criticism, nor is it that oppression is attributed to a vague notion of global capitalism; rather, careful attention to global–local connections opens politics up to the ranging actors complicit in Israel's occupation of Palestine.

Women's Lives and the Families of Laborers in Al-Walaja, Palestine

Checkpoint 300 is an important checkpoint terminal between Bethlehem and Jerusalem that, like so many in Palestine, is known for overcrowding, delays, and intimidation from security staff. Each morning, 4,000 to 7,000 male laborers enter its packed corridors and turnstiles to cross using a so-called eight-hour permit, a condition of passage for West Bank Palestinians to work in East Jerusalem and Israel. Permits can be denied or revoked for reasons including dismissal from an Israeli company, union activity, imprisonment, political activism,

being too old (over fifty), being too young (under thirty), or being unmarried, childless, or both. The final two grounds are expressions of Israel's logic that family ties make men less willing to travel through checkpoints to engage in violent resistance or terrorist activity and thus risk death or detention. The "married with children" condition has obvious and profound effects for women: To cross the checkpoint to provide labor, a man must—for the right to mobility and remunerated labor—leave a wife and at least one child behind. The men are typically employed in the construction sector in East Jerusalem and Israel at lower rates of pay than non-Palestinians and residents of Jerusalem and often without health provision, vacation allowance, or pay slips. Additionally, the labor is back-breaking, health and safety regulations are lax (Ross 2019), and West Bank Palestinians—even more so than Druze, Ethiopian Jews, migrant workers, and Palestinian/"Arab" Israelis—are the most precariously employed of all marginalized groups in Israel's labor market (Abdo 2013). It is against this backdrop that the research explores the gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor in the context of entrenched division.

The fieldwork for the research was conducted in Al-Walaja, a village on the northwest edge of Bethlehem, around 8km south of Jerusalem's Old City and 3.4km from Checkpoint 300. Approximately 2,400 people live in the village (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East 2013). Al-Walaja lost three quarters of its land in 1948 and has lost further territory to the nearby settlements and the construction of the Wall (see Joronen 2019). Our fieldwork involved a meeting with the village's women's group (The Palestinian Walaja Women 2019) and engaging one of its prominent members, Lamees,¹ as a research assistant. With Lamees we codesigned a set of questions that examine women's lives in relation to the nearby checkpoint and flows of labor. The accounts are drawn from a larger data set—comprising twelve in-depth interviews and two focus groups—collected during a research collaboration with the women's group as part of a long-term project on security infrastructure and women's mobility.² For clarity and concision we present the cases of four women from the fieldwork—those of Hayam, Suad, Tala, and Karima—together with supporting statements from the

broader data set that convey important aspects of the women's roles in social reproduction in the context of low-wage, cross-border labor. We organize the data around three key themes—(1) time and men's labor, (2) time and women's labor, and (iii) emotional labor and the home—that we take into the discussion of articulation and relational comparison in the sections that follow.

Time and Men's Labor

Many of the men in Al-Walaja wake in the early hours to form part of the dense crowds at the checkpoint for a crossing that can take between forty-five minutes and three hours. Their daily routine is bound to the opening hours of the checkpoint and the pace at which passage is granted. Hayam described the daily routine thus:

My husband wakes up at 2 a.m. and leaves home for the checkpoint at 3 a.m. He gets there around 3:30 a.m. when ... it's [already] really overcrowded ... the checkpoint is sometimes closed by the soldiers and won't be opened to make things easier. The soldiers check all details and many workers get delayed and get to work late.

To wake up at such an early hour, he goes to sleep as early as possible—"around 9 to 10 p.m."—and does this six days each week. His time at home is therefore limited, meaning he has little capacity for activities not related to ensuring he is able to repeat the commute and labor the following day. As Hayam summarized:

It takes until 6 a.m. for him to be able to pass through, he gets to work at 7 a.m. and works until 4 p.m. and gets back home by 7 p.m. He barely has time to eat and go to sleep, he has no time to spend at home or do anything other than going to work and coming back, most of his time is wasted on trying to get to work and trying to come home.

For Hayam's husband, the checkpoint imposes a four-hour commute in the morning and a two-hour return (the checkpoint is more easily passed in the opposite direction), thus adding six hours onto an already exhausting day of labor on a construction site. Many of the husbands, Hayam's included, are absent from the home for up to fifteen or sixteen hours a day. Other women in Al-Walaja talked about similarly long hours spent away from home and the added factor that even when present, the

men are “exhausted from the long hours he’s been away” (Karima) and even “tired, angry ... and [already] stressed about the next day” (Amani). A prominent effect of low-wage, cross-border labor for the men of Al-Walaja is thus one of subjugation to the needs of the Israeli labor market, and this labor imposes a prolonged absence (and an exhausted presence) of men from the family home that diminishes their capacities to contribute to domestic labor.

Time and Women’s Labor

As Hayam noted earlier, aside from the obvious and visible effects for male laborers in spaces outside the house, it is also the case that the checkpoint and conditions of labor carry effects inside the space of the home. All fifteen of the women involved in the research drew attention to the ways in which they were also caught within the temporalities of the checkpoint and long days of labor. Suad, for instance, explicated:

My husband goes to work very early in the morning, sometimes before dawn prayer [4:00–4:30 a.m.]. An hour or two after he leaves, I wake my children to get ready to go to school. I make them breakfast and I take them to school, and I take my daughter to university. I work around the house all day and tend to the garden. If I have work to do at the Women’s Group or the village council, I go to do that for a couple of hours. Then I come home to prepare food for my children before they come back. They used to wait for their father to eat together but these days he comes home later because of the checkpoint.

Suad’s account here emphasizes a connection between the times imposed on her husband and the ways they extend into her daily routine. He wakes early and returns late while she carries out all kinds of tasks that are intensified by his absence (e.g., she prepares both breakfast and dinner twice). Suad continued:

While we wait for him, I or my [older] daughter help the children with homework and I prepare his food for when he gets back around 7 p.m. or sometimes 8 p.m. He eats, sits with us for half an hour, then goes to sleep to go to work again the next morning. I make sure there’s some breakfast ready. This is our daily life.

Adding to the process of gendering, it is telling here that any remaining labor deficit is made up for by the older daughter who helps with homework. The

unwaged labor of social reproduction thus falls on women. Hayam made this clear: “[Because he’s absent] I have to deal with family duties alone, we can’t share responsibilities [so] I have to organize all family issues, house requirements, deal with the children.” Labor conditions and the checkpoint in this way foreclose an even division of social reproduction between the women and their husbands because the long commute and tiring day leave little time or energy for the men to fully participate in home life. Randa made this point explicitly: “Because he’s away a lot and so tired at home ... the responsibilities that my husband should do but can’t are fulfilled by me. I cover for the husband and the wife at the same time!”

Emotional Labor and the Home

A third prominent theme from Al-Walaja is the prevalence of exhaustion and stress in the homes of families of men who are engaged in low-paid, cross-border labor. This came through most clearly with two women involved in the study, Tala and Karima. Tala explicated the ways in which the emotional dimensions of the checkpoint are brought into the family home when her husband returns:

Before [working] he has to pass the checkpoint. It’s always overcrowded and it affects him physically, once he came home with a broken rib because of the pushing and squeezing. ... He gets angry, it is not easy for him, he wakes up early and goes into the overcrowded place with gates and inspections, this affects him at work and affects him when he comes home, because he is angry at home, too.

Crucially, Tala not only described her husband’s experience but emphasized how her daily life is also made “emotionally difficult” by labor relations and the checkpoint: “He is tired emotionally, and for us we remain uncertain about his day, don’t know if he passed, how his day went, so it’s emotionally difficult for us too ... at home with the responsibilities.” This theme was brought to the fore by Karima when she was asked to reflect on the ways in which the stressful commute and labor conditions affect her daily life and responsibilities:

I feel more responsible because I have to care for the kids, who should not feel like there is anything wrong. I feel pressure, I’m always under stress. I should not get angry, but internally, I’m angry and stressed out. ... I should not show that to my children and relatives. I

have to act calm and try my best not to raise my voice at home, and not to project my stress on my kids ... it's too much pressure for any mother should have to deal with on her own.

In quite stark terms, Karima revealed the ways in which she not only fills the gaps left by the domestic labor deficit but is also burdened with a significant amount of emotional labor for which she clearly struggles to find a release. What is particularly notable in Karima's words is the sense that stress increases because of an imperative to "act calm," even as the pressure continues to rise. This dynamic was also evident in Hayam's experience: "He's always nervous ... [and] this affects our life in a negative way—if I have a trouble with one of the kids, I can't discuss it with him because he will always have a nervous reaction."

Taken as representative cases, the words of Hayam, Suad, Tala, Karima, and others evidence the ways in which women's lives are intimately bound to Palestinian men's low-wage, cross-border labor in East Jerusalem and Israel. Even though in these cases the women do not participate formally in the colonial labor market, their days are filled with the labor of social reproduction—they thus maintain the laboring bodies that sustain portions of the Israeli economy (Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2004; Bhattacharya 2017). In this way, there is a bond—an *articulation*—between the roles that men fulfill in Israel's low-wage sectors and the roles that women fulfill in the space of the home. It is to this articulation that the discussion turns in the following section.

Parallels: Apartheid-Era South Africa and Articulation

In common with the case of Palestine–Israel, the advancement of South Africa's colonial economy was dependent on a geographically differentiated and gendered racial hierarchy (Greenstein 2015; Kasrils 2015). To sustain political control and support the mining, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors, the *apartheid* or separate development of Black and White communities protected the latter from wage competition and suppressed the overall cost of labor. The Black majority was segregated in rural reserves or townships—to "keep the black man in his place, and that place was working for the white man" (Mackinnon 2012, 235)—and entered White space

into the subordinating relations of labor. A watershed moment in this, and one that can be brought aside the increased closure of the Palestinian West Bank after 2005, was the 1970 Bantu Homelands and Citizenship Act that assigned a restricted citizenship to all Black Africans who lived in one of ten Bantustans or tribal homelands. The Act reified a racist logic of separate development that created impoverished labor reserves and relocated 3.5 million Black Africans to the Bantustans—or the state's "dumping grounds" as Murray (1987, 244) put it—that were marked by "acute poverty and malnutrition, grotesque overcrowding, haphazard but intensive political repression, [and] extreme dependence on wage earning in 'white' South Africa" (Murray 1987, 244; see also Evans 2013). In this relationship of dependence, mobility for Black Africans was strictly controlled by a bureaucratic infrastructure of ordinances to manage segregation, rather than checkpoints or a separation wall. Just as Palestinians are subject to a punitive permit system (Berda 2017), so, too, was the movement of Black Africans regulated through a passbook (*dompas*) that permitted access to urban areas for only three days and only to seek work (Mackinnon 2012).

These apartheid conditions, although oppressive for all non-White Africans, are descriptive of predominantly, but not exclusively, male Black laborers who worked in the White-owned economy, from Cape fruit farms to Gauteng gold mines and from stevedoring in Durban's dockyards to domestic service in the suburbs of Johannesburg (Jones 1994), the latter being one of the narrower range of jobs that also employed Black women. In a further parallel with the West Bank, there was an oversupply of workers in the late 1970s and 1980s, leading to high levels of unemployment (~25 percent) and the inevitable (and purposeful) consequence of suppressed wages (Mackinnon 2012). In the West Bank, 18 percent of workers are unemployed, and wages there are 20 percent lower than on the other side of the checkpoint (Human Rights Watch [HRW] 2016). For African workers, real wages were between four and five times less than White pay in manufacturing and a frankly astonishing twenty times lower than White wages in the mining sector (Mackinnon 2012). A consequence, and one crucial for our analysis here, is that the wage differential was enabled because the cost of the reproduction and maintenance of labor power was borne by the male workers'

families, such as through women-led subsistence farming on reserve homesteads (Sharp and Spiegel 1990). That is, women's work of "enabling and maintaining life—both human and nonhuman" (i.e., crops and livestock; Katz, Marston, and Mitchell 2015, 174) subsidized the low wages of migrant male workers, thus lowering the cost of the reproduction of proletariat labor power (Datta 1998). Social reproduction comes to the fore as integral not only to the function of capitalism *per se* but as a realm of labor through which the colonial state and its constitutive segregations are (re)produced and maintained (e.g., Chilmeran and Pratt 2019).

Under apartheid, the notion of articulation provides a means of understanding the coexistence of two modes of production. Wolpe's (1972) work on "cheap labor power" is seminal in this respect for its conceptualization of the coexistence of a Black, primarily male, labor force employed in the White economy below the cost of household sustenance, a cost that was made up by women-led peasant farming. These two separated modes of production articulated with one another to suppress the cost of labor. Wolpe (1972) defined apartheid as a mechanism specific to industrialized South Africa that "maintain[ed] a high rate of capitalist exploitation through a system which guarantees a cheap and controlled labor-force, under circumstances in which the conditions of reproduction (the redistributive African economy in the Reserves) of that labor-force is rapidly disintegrating" (433). In this respect, separate development was essential, because if the capitalist modes of production and peasant farming had coexisted in the same political space (i.e., in South Africa without apartheid), then the expansion of capitalist relations would dissolve the precapitalist mode of production (Harvey 2018). Instead, the growth of capitalist accumulation was predicated on increased surplus extraction from African agricultural reserves as the cost of social reproduction of migrant Black male labor was increasingly borne by women—and older (often female) children, too—who faced ever greater impoverishment through the 1970s and 1980s (Evans 2013). This structural Marxian analysis is helpful to explain how labor and gender relations intersect—particularly in the earlier mid-twentieth-century period Wolpe analyzed—but there is insufficient attentiveness to the evolving intersections of race, class, and gender in the lived lives of people brought within colonial labor regimes,

as various critics have noted (e.g., Hall 1980; Bozzoli 1983; Hart 2007; Clarno 2017).

Bozzoli's (1983, 1991) important corrective, for instance, argues that women's subordinate positions were not solely attributable to capitalist processes but that separate development adapts to and incorporates social forms, including relations of race, gender, religion, and tribal hierarchies, which emerge independent of class. Bozzoli turned attention to the uneven gender relations in both Black and White South Africa—in terms of, for instance, domestic violence, im/mobility, and marginalization—to develop an approach that is attentive to both the relations within and between segregated economies and the ways in which capitalist relations reconfigure, rather than produce, the sexual division of labor (Hall 1980; Crush 1994). Clarno's (2017) recent study illuminates the racialized categories of "Black crime" and "Palestinian terrorism" that emerge through complex (re)articulations within colonized space, in the unequal distributions of wealth in post-apartheid Johannesburg and post-Oslo Bethlehem. The key insight here is that capitalist projects (e.g., neoliberalism) articulate with post- and settler-colonial projects of segregation—often in an independent, multifaceted, or contradictory manner—to maintain a system of a marginalized, securitized, and ultimately racialized surplus population (Clarno 2017).³

A further important (if implicit) corrective issues from the work of writers such as Mies (1986) and Gibson-Graham (1996), whose elaborations on the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy push against the analytical and political notion of a "dual economy" of two separate realms of colony and metropole (e.g., Frank 1967) or of independent domestic and wage-labor spheres. "To talk of two systems leaves the problem of how they are related to each other unresolved," wrote Mies (1986, 38), arguing that the sexual division of labor cannot be likened to "separate development" inasmuch as it is both product and productive of the coconstituency of patriarchy and capitalism (see also Gibson-Graham 1996). Albeit via a different line of (economic) separation, this perspective directs attention to gendered oppression as intimately bound to class exploitation and thus not so conveniently analyzed in terms of articulations between two neatly separable sites of production (e.g., the home and the colliery).

Inflecting the notion of articulation with such correctives brings to the fore a codependence between the structural labor conditions detailed so far and the distinguishable—but not distinct or separate—domestic sphere of social reproduction. Previously peripheral or obfuscated dynamics then emerge as central to analysis such as the physical health of women whose migrant husbands returned home with sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV; Lurie et al. 1997) and the mental well-being of women faced with the uncertainty of prolonged marital separation (Sharp and Spiegel 1990) and eventual breakdowns and estrangements (Evans 2013). A retroductive (re)reading of the archives from this perspective also reveals numerous cases that, albeit situated within very different social and cultural geographies, resonate with those documented earlier from Al-Walaja in Palestine. For instance, a woman interviewed for the open-access project “Legacies of the 1913 Land Act,” Florence Mongake of Mogopa, North West Province,⁴ recounted that before apartheid, men of her community “would be at home with the cows” but after they “joined the mine ... [to live in labor compounds] they would leave you for three years and you would be pregnant and the men is gone and you must make sure your children are eating.” Similarly, from the same project, Elsie Motsusi⁵ talked about women’s lives in her North West Province community of Braklaagte: “The main reason [for struggle] was that men left women at home. Left for greener pastures. Women are not strong enough to plough ... [the men] would live by the hostels; they would leave the wives and kids to starve.”

Across this archival material, it is commonplace for women’s domesticity and impoverishment to be tied to the cross-border labor provided by their husbands. This brought, as the following excerpt from a 1978 interview with an unnamed woman from Transkei Bantustan illustrates, a sense of solitude that connects directly to exclusion from urban economic space:

We feel lonely in this desolate place where so many of our husbands must leave to find work, and stay away all year, sometimes many years. We have pity for our husbands. We know why they must take town girls [commercial sex workers/second wives]—men are men—and we also know why they want us to stay home, to keep a home for him and to make a place for his children, because we have no rights for a place in the cities.⁶

The woman’s husband (also unnamed) here worked more than 800 kilometers away in Cape Town, a place that the permit system made simultaneously a space of labor for him and inaccessible to her and their children, thus enforcing a reconfiguration—and *disintegration*—of family life according to the spatial exigencies of the Bantustan system. For this woman, those mentioned earlier (Florence and Elsie), and thousands more, cross-border wage labor not only articulated with and exacerbated a sexual division of household labor; it also imposed a heavy psychological load:

There was once an old woman who lived next door to our house and she had eight children; three of them worked but didn’t live with her nor did they come to visit her. This woman had an irresponsible husband who worked in the White suburbs and came home only when he desired. One late afternoon when returning from work, I see this old woman sitting on a small stool, her shoulders bent inwards and her face clasped in her hands. She was sitting beside a brazier fire and on the fire was a boiling pot ... they hadn’t had a meal for three days, and the pot on the brazier was just filled with water.⁷

The image here of a suffering woman is stark. Her condition is effected by the apartheid labor market segregation of families and thus draws together women’s domestic abandonment as a condition of production. Key South African commodities—gold, uranium (in Witwatersrand), diamonds (Northern Cape), coal (Gauteng), and fruit (Southern Cape; Jones 1994)—were produced for global markets at competitive prices through a labor system enabled by the unwaged work of women such that they were integral to this geographically dispersed mode of production.

Mining was at the core of the regionally dominant apartheid economy and depended on migrant labor from South African townships and the Bantustans but also the wider periphery of independent states such as Lesotho, Malawi, and Mozambique (Murray 1987). Mining employed approximately 350,000 migrant laborers in 1960, rising to a peak of more than 450,000 in 1990. Over 60 percent of mine workers came from outside South Africa and only around 150,000 from the rural reserves (Mackinnon 2012). Neighboring countries were locked in a relationship of dependency because they needed the hard currency earned by mine workers. Following the formal independence of many African states in

the 1960s and 1970s, Prime Minister Verwoerd tried to make South Africa's separate development more palatable internationally, without eroding White privilege. Accordingly, the late-apartheid policy of granting nominal independence to four of the ten Bantustans must be further understood relationally as, in part, an attempt to divert external criticism away from South Africa (Simon 1998). The coexistence of foreign Malawian and Mozambican mine workers alongside migrants from the newly created "independent" Bantustans helped to reinforce the notion that these Black Africans were also a culturally distinct population "foreign" to White South Africa (Datta 1998).

Through the 1970s and 1980s the South African economy became more integrated with global capital flows and commodity circuits. Mining, especially of gold and platinum, produced vast profits for domestic and international firms including AngloAmerican and Oppenheimer. As a vehemently anticommunist ally of the U.S. bloc, Pretoria was geopolitically important and sought to dominate southern Africa militarily as well as economically. From the mid-1970s, U.S.-backed interventions by South Africa in Angola led to sustained conflicts with the communist-aligned People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola and its Cuban allies. In 1985 the Botha government ramped up regional destabilization policies in Angola, and also Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, coinciding with Ronald Reagan's reelection (Cammack 1990). The apartheid security apparatus served a global agenda as well as a national agenda. The strategic importance of South Africa was evidenced as the United States and Britain blocked attempts to isolate the White regime through the United Nations following widespread condemnation after events such as the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. These global dynamics therefore direct us to understand the impoverishment of the wives and children of African migrant workers relationally rather than viewing them as processes internal to South Africa in isolation; the political desire of White nationalists for separation and the labor requirements of industry coalesced with the exigencies of international capital and the geopolitical imperative to fight communism. In this way, gendered, cross-border labor was not solely a domestic policy but a dynamic of international economic and political relations. Geographies of labor expand from domestic life in the Bantustan to the site of physical

labor and from there intersect with the wider southern African political economy and connect to the global commodity chains that ensured a flow of capital that upheld segregation.

Relational Comparison

Toward the objective of better understanding the gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor in the context of entrenched division, the lesson from South Africa is that two distinguishable (but not separate) types of work, cross-border employment and social reproduction, can articulate to provide a cheap labor force for colonial exploitation as part of a global capitalist economy. Like the examples from contemporary Palestine, wage labor in apartheid-era South Africa depended on "life's work" (Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2004): the social reproduction essential to but set outside the space of (male) wage labor; the work of women and men are mutually constitutive. In both cases, while men provide labor power to the respective colonial economies, women maintain the homes and families that, in turn, are vital to sustaining men's labor power. The examples from Palestine and South Africa also show how women are included in a labor system that sets the conditions of domesticity and limits on social life and is connected to the physical and emotional well-being dynamics of the family (including, at times, its disintegration). There are simultaneously quite fundamental differences in the economic and social geographies across the two examples (most obviously, distances in South Africa were greater, separations were significantly longer, and Palestinians are subject to more securitized border technologies). Attention to place-based social dynamics is essential to avoid reducing inequalities to the ahistorical processes of capitalism, and articulation is only useful if it is deployed alongside an appreciation of the specific—and independent, multifaceted, or contradictory—combinations that comprise social formations (see Clarno 2017). Ultimately each moment of life in the periphery has its own "historical givens," which requires work "on the ground" to understand (Bozzoli 1983, 155–56). Although articulation can help us to understand the divisions between the roles of women and men in colonial economies, gender dynamics vary markedly across social context.

The discussion of South Africa presented earlier indicates a need to consider wider political and economic geographies in which labor articulations are situated. The question of gender and cross-border labor migration is thus loosened from its binds to state or occupied territory and reset within a global frame. The influential work of Hart (2006, 981) comes to the fore here, particularly for its focus on critical ethnography and economic inequality, nationalism, and racism to produce an analysis of the “mutually constitutive process through which metropolis and (post)colonies make and remake one another.” Crucial to such an approach is the notion that racialized labor regimes produced through territorial segregation are an integral part of globalized capitalism and, therefore, comparing a singular Palestine–Israel to a single apartheid South Africa would provide only a partial account; apartheid-era South Africa and Palestine–Israel are each different “nodes in globally interconnected historical geographies” (Hart 2018, 373). This is what distinguishes Hart’s work from many of the comparative analyses that predominate in history and political science: Comparison becomes subordinate to advancing historically grounded theories (see also McMichael 1990). The promise of such an approach is that by understanding how cross-border labor in South Africa and Palestine fit into a global capitalist whole, we can better understand the geographically multiple (i.e., not only local) processes that shape each place. To this end, we now turn to demonstrate how a relational understanding can provide new knowledge on the gendered processes of low-wage, cross-border labor in occupied Palestine.

A Relational Comparison of the Gendered Effects of Low-Wage, Cross-Border Labor in Palestine

In this final section, we set the gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor in the wider frame of entrenched spatial division. Taking our lead from the preceding discussion of relational comparison, the questions we take to the conditions of cross-border labor are as follows: How is this a space of global capital? How are the women’s days affected by international flows of objects, ideas, and people? Or, to follow Massey (2004, 12), we set Al-Walaja within the “power-geometries of globalization” to show how

it is “a ‘place’ in which certain important elements of capitalist globalization are organized, coordinated, produced.” The focus is thus less on the particularity of Israel’s occupation but the way in which it is situated within, enabled by, and in some cases subjected to the logics and spatialities of capital: international flows of objects, ideas, and people touch the ground at Checkpoint 300 in ways that make it a site in the production of global security and surveillance processes, rather than just a recipient (Bair 2010; Hart 2020).

As is evident in the testimonies of women in Al-Walaja, the nearby checkpoint affects their lives in two primary ways: First, checkpoint delays significantly reduce the amount of time laboring men spend at home; second, crowds and delays impose significant levels of stress on both the men and their families in the home. The conditions of the checkpoint are thus at the center of women’s experiences as the affective geographies of the border extend into the home, and they are central to Israel’s control of Palestinian mobility. It is not that this spatial control can be attributed solely to the colonialism or racialization specific to place, though; checkpoints in Israel—just like countless security infrastructures the world over, like prisons (Davis 2000), customs zones (Brooks 2012), migrant detention centers (Martin 2012), and airports (Salter 2008)—are subject to the processes of privatization: tendering, outsourcing, and streamlining (Havkin 2015). An outcome of this process at Checkpoint 300 has been the development of permanent complexes of security objects: corridors, turnstiles, and check booths (see Rijke and Minca 2019) that are, according to the Israeli Civil Administration (2005), designed “to enable speedy and efficient security checks in a minimum of time.” To deliver this, the building and operation of checkpoints went out to tender in 2005 with a situation now that a complex of actors—people and ideas—operates them with sometimes up to nine state, public, and private organizations involved in maintenance, technology, and staffing (Hever 2018). Around Jerusalem, checkpoints such as Qalandia and Checkpoint 300 are operated by a coalition of state agents—Israeli Crossing Points Authority staff, border police, Israel Defense Forces soldiers, Shin Bet agents—and employees of private security firms such as Sheleg Lavan and Modi’in Ezrachi (Whoprofits 2016; Farah and Abdallah 2019).

Of further relevance regarding the presence of private actors is the development in recent years of checkpoints as a highly technologized space comprising cameras, remote-controlled turnstiles, and biometric scanners, each operated by staff whose decision-making powers are deferred to automated technologies that are designed to minimize interactions between Palestinians and security personnel (Hever 2018).⁸ Of these automated processes—amalgams of both ideas and objects—Hewlett Packard’s Basel Biometric Identification System provides fingerprint and facial recognition technology to verify identity and thereby allow or refuse passage, and Rapiscan and L3Harris Safeview body scanners reveal the belongings of Palestinians passing through the checkpoint (Whoprofits 2016; Spektor 2020). The provenance of this hardware and software is telling: Research and development proliferates from Palo Alto, California (Hewlett Packard), Torrance, California (Rapiscan), and Melbourne, Florida (L3Harris), to manufacturing sites in Hyderabad, Singapore, and Johor Bahru before being marketed at international security fairs (Stockmarr 2015) and purchased by intermediary contractors to the State of Israel such as G4S Israel (a subsidiary of UK-based G4S PLC, the world’s largest private security firm). The significance for the targets of technologized security spaces is profound for the reason that, ethically, as L. Amoore and Hall (2009) discussed, decisions are so pointedly “data-led” such that security staff—the people, or substance of politics—“never confront the political difficulties of that which cannot be seen or resolved” (455). In Palestine specifically, Israel’s deployment of these technologies in larger checkpoints (e.g., 300) is “an attempt to disembodify the brutal and messy substance of their work” (Hammami 2019, 96).

We can thus build toward a notion that dehumanization in the checkpoint—that which has direct effects on women’s lives in spaces remote to the checkpoint such as homes in Al-Walaja—is owed in significant part to global flows of ideas and capital. This notion is explored specifically in Checkpoint 300 in Rijke and Minca’s (2019, 984) insightful analysis of the “brutal materialities” of checkpoint technologies where “machines’ ‘responses’ [mark] the body of the individuals subjected to their decision: from beeping to remaining silent ... from the contact of the turnstiles’ arms to their subtle but liberatory ‘clicking.’” From this materialist point of view,

technologies in the checkpoint—designed in California, manufactured in East Asia, traded at arms conventions in London and Chicago—effect real consequences for individuals in a specific locale: They, the ideas and objects of boundless global tech capitalism, order “long and painful experiences” for Palestinians attempting to pass through (Rijke and Minca 2019, 986). At the same time, and as Hammami (2019, 96) further noted, technologies “inevitably fail” and are even designed to be inefficient so as to maintain a “constant state of uncertainty” by reinstating the contested human-to-human encounter between security personnel and Palestinians. What is usually unacknowledged in this encounter is the fact that security personnel are often not direct representatives of the state but private labor on short-term contracts with low salaries and unsocial working hours, a work that can only attract “people who do not have a real alternative” (Havkin 2015, 36). Thus, workers in checkpoints are—if by different degree—embroiled in their own exploitative labor relations, and their mistreatment of Palestinians cannot be considered without referring to an articulation with the casualization of security labor and the reduced accountability of private organizations. This is not apologism but an acknowledgment of a dynamic where the state opens a space in which “supervising mechanisms” (even where they are weak) are absented and (precariously employed) security personnel are free(r) to use “unnecessary and excessive force” (Farah and Abdallah 2019, 17).

Further situating Checkpoint 300 and Al-Walaja within the “power-geometries of globalization” is the fact that the movement of technologies does not flow only one way. This is a base tenet for understanding colonizer-colonized spaces, as prominent geographers such as Graham (2010) have written: Colonized space such as Palestine constitutes something of a laboratory for experiments with different technologies of control—Graham (2010, xvii) gave the examples “fingerprinting, panoptic prisons and Haussmannian boulevard-building through neighborhoods of insurrection”—before importing them into the metropole in what Foucault (2003) termed a “boomerang effect” whereby “[a] whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practise something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself” (103). Israel’s position in a “boomerang”

movement of technologies has grown hugely since 11 September 2001 when Israel emerged as a “showroom” for state-of-the-art security equipment (see Klein 2007, 435). In the years since, security innovation such as the Wall (and its checkpoints) has become, Farah and Abdallah (2019, 22–23) evidenced, “a selling point for businesses involved in its construction” that received a further boost after the 2016 election of President Donald Trump when shares in Israeli companies such as Mahal, Elbit, and Elta received huge injections of capital from involvement—or prospective involvement—in the construction of the U.S.–Mexico wall (see Farah and Abdallah 2019). New and more recent customers have emerged from Israel’s newly normalized relations with Arab Gulf states who wish to use the same systems to monitor their own populations for “dissident” elements (Shatz 2021). Such evidence adds credence to the laboratory thesis (cf. Machold 2018) that posits Palestinian territory as an experimental ground for the development of Israel’s arms industry; it also shows that along with the sale of hardware comes the model of segregation and articulations that impresses so significantly on everyday lives, such as those of women in Al-Walaja documented earlier.

A further economic aspect has to do with the hierarchical ordering of relations between two economies, one in Israel and the other in the West Bank. The Peace Process that culminated in the Oslo Accords (1993 and 1995) initiated a division rather than integration of the Palestinian and Israeli economies (see Haddad 2016; Rabie 2021) that is most clearly embodied in the “Separation Wall” and checkpoints that regulate cross-border Palestinian labor. The Wall does not exclude; rather, it modulates the number of crossings according to the exigencies of the dominant economy—that of Israel—via a permit system designed to ensure specific sectors access to a ready pool of marginalized and securitized low-wage labor (Clarno 2017). For instance, the post-Oslo construction boom in Jerusalem and Israel has been fueled by 40,000 sector-specific permits for Palestinians to work on building sites in East Jerusalem and Israel (Ross 2019); in the agricultural sector, 13,000 permits bring Palestinian workers into Israel’s fields where pay can be twice that for similar (and scarce) work in the West Bank. In both construction and agriculture, the working conditions for Palestinians are poor: They suffer lax health and

safety regulations, undocumented and delayed pay, and very little in terms of job security, sick pay, or holiday leave—and can be paid as little as one fifth the salary of an Israeli citizen (HRW 2016).

One important reason for the maintenance of such low wages and poor working conditions is the presence of a global reserve army of labor. Israel’s integration into the global economy has brought different waves of migrant workers, each with different relations to the ethno-nationalist project. For instance, post-1967 saw a marked increase in Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jews taking residence in Israel, in part to fill a requirement for low-wage labor as the economy liberalized and the Ashkenazi middle classes grew (Abdo 2013). The end of the First Intifada and breakup of the Soviet Union brought an influx of more than 1 million Russian Jews that reduced the reliance—and thus bargaining power—of Palestinian labor (Klein 2007) and (as importantly) facilitated the spatial partition of the Occupied Territories (Clarno 2017). In addition to Jewish immigration (*Aliyah*), the post-Oslo period saw greater numbers of “guest workers” arrive in Israel from West Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. From these regions, 240,000 workers arrived between the mid-1990s and 2002, constituting a full 11 percent of Israel’s labor force. These labor pools are readily deported and reimported according to economic conditions; more than 140,000 were deported in the early 2000s as a response to escalating unemployment in Israel’s Jewish population (Willen 2007). Such deportability, in effect, “serves to create and sustain a legally vulnerable and precarious labor force of migrants [that] are afraid to lose their jobs” and thus enables employers to drive down wages and conditions for all cross-border workers, those from Nigeria and Al-Walaja alike (Raijman and Kemp 2014, 16; see also Englert 2020, 1662).

In recent years, one specific group of imported laborers has gained heightened attention for particularly poor working conditions. Owing to the 2011 Thai–Israel Cooperation on the Placement of Workers, there are now more than 30,000 Thai migrant laborers in the agricultural sector. The workers have been subject to high-profile investigations by Human Rights Watch (HRW 2015) and the BBC’s Thai language news outlet (2018). HRW’s report evidences substandard living conditions, working days of up to seventeen hours, as few as four rest

days per year, payment below legal minimum wage, and a lax enforcement of labor laws. In these conditions, 122 Thai migrant workers died in the period from 2011 to 2015, including, the HRW report documents, “Praiwan Seesukha [who] worked in a moshav in central Israel, for two years and eight months until his death in May 2013 at the age of 37.” Before his death, Seesukha “was planning to return within a couple of months to Thailand, where he had a wife and a son in his late teens and also supported his wife’s parents.” The BBC’s report—three years later—shows no improvement and focuses on the case of Wicha Duangdeegaew, who died at the age of thirty-six after long working days and exposure to harmful pesticides. Focusing on the wife he left behind, the report explains, “She will never know why her husband died, he worked hard all his life because his family is poor.” The two cases in the HRW and BBC reports are the tragic extreme of labor exploitation, and they are indicative of a broader logic of labor relations where the power geometries of Israeli capitalism extend into Thai domestic spaces. Of the 30,000 workers, 95 percent are male (“Govt Allays Israel Labour Pact Fears” 2020), and most leave families and children at home for the duration of the five-year guest worker permits provided for in the bilateral agreement. Although it is yet to be documented, the articulations with women’s labor at home in Thailand are likely to be pronounced, perhaps even similar to those examples of multiyear separation in South Africa where, as we discussed earlier, the cumulative effects of the burden of social reproduction could be devastating.

The relational approach taken in this section has sought to center the testimonies of women in Al-Walaja and connect their experiences to broader geographies of capital and articulation. To the key question of how gender relations are formed globally, the response is ranging: The checkpoint is formed of an assemblage of new technologies aimed simultaneously at controlling Palestinian mobility and developing techniques that can be marketed overseas and to neighboring states; the transnational security companies seek only to increase efficacy (in terms of “better border security”) and profit (in terms of lower wages), a dynamic with deleterious effects on Palestinians’ experiences of crossing the checkpoint; and the labor market they are compelled to enter is maintained at low wages and poor conditions in part by the importation of readily exploitable, non-rights-

demanding workers from poorer parts of the Global South. The gendered effects of low-wage, cross-border labor in Al-Walaja are thus formed, in important ways, through the global geographies of the security industry and migrant labor, where imported workers alienated from their distant homes depend on guest worker visas that effect (and connect) further articulations with households overseas, even as far as Thailand. It is in this sense that we set Al-Walaja within the power geometries of globalization and explicate its place within the coordination of the logics and spatialities of capital: The burdens of cross-border labor are brought, in significant part, by the international flows of objects, ideas, and people that coalesce at Checkpoint 300.

Conclusion

Our objective in this article was to better understand the gendered effects of low-wage cross-border labor in occupied Palestine within a global frame of interlinked and uneven development. To this end, we began with the perspectives of women in the village of Al-Walaja near Bethlehem where many men travel through the close-by Checkpoint 300 to work in East Jerusalem and Israel, often in low-paid jobs in construction and agriculture. We turned to the context of apartheid-era South Africa to learn from another highly segregated space in which two distinguishable types of work, cross-border labor and social reproduction, can articulate with one another to provide a cheap labor force for colonial exploitation as part of a global capitalist economy. The intention from there was not to compare Palestine–Israel to apartheid South Africa but to read the former through the global spatial dynamics of the latter, where the reproduction of the segregationist state drew sustenance from international economic and political relations. Comparison in this sense is relational and recognizes segregation in Palestine–Israel as a part of globally interconnected geographies that shape security infrastructures, formal movements of cross-border labor, and the informal divisions of labor in the home that are constitutive of gender. The issue of gender and cross-border labor within Palestine–Israel then becomes one that starts from women’s experiences at home and looks outward, to the convergence of global flows of capital, technology, and migrant labor. As we hope to have convinced, this perspective renders an understanding of

the gendered dynamics of low-wage, cross-border labor in Palestine as an effect of both Israel's military occupation and its embrace of neoliberal policies within global capitalism (Hart 2006). To close, we set out concisely three ways in which the research in this article contributes to broader geographical scholarship.

A first contribution is to foreground the lives of women and social reproduction in low-wage, cross-border labor systems. Immediately apparent in the testimonies of women in Al-Walaja is that where male workers cross the checkpoint for employment, a domestic labor deficit is created that women address by taking on extra household tasks, cooking, parenting, and so forth. Revisiting the South African archives demonstrated how women living under apartheid also faced an increased domestic burden due to their husbands' absences for cross-border work, resulting in a turn to subsistence farming. There is not a strict equivalence, but in both contexts important elements of life are structured by labor's spatial segregation from the home: Social reproduction in the periphery is thus inextricable from colonial labor in the core. Through articulation—or joining together—a racialized labor system and gendered domestic labor across borders are maintained that (re)configure social life to sustain a workforce that serves a privileged ethnic-national group (Hart 2006; Clarno 2017). The discussion here thus complements existing work on women's relations to borders and checkpoints in Palestine (e.g., Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015; Griffiths and Joronen 2019; Hammami 2019) and indicates new lines of inquiry across broader geographies, perhaps a most urgent of which is this: What are the gendered effects of the 2011 Thai–Israel Cooperation on the Placement of Workers? Just as important, although analysis might focus on the fact that Israel's \$9 billion security industry (~21 percent of gross national product, the world's eighth largest) grows apace, a sustained feminist critique might draw out not only the quotidian realities that are (re)made in subordinate terms but also those on which arms production depends, thus recognizing a potential in the depended-on to effect change in the disaggregated channels of a disunified capitalism (Gibson-Graham 1996).

Second, the account we provide interrogates the scalar relationship between state regimes of segregation and global flows of labor and capital. Colonies,

although once intuitively considered second-order places that are somehow left behind by progress elsewhere (Blaut 1993; Brooks 2017), are increasingly recognized as spaces of innovating ideas and technologies (e.g., Foucault 2003; Lowe 2015). In fact, peripheral borderlands are active in reconfiguring infrastructures of capital accumulation (Coronil 2001): In the 1970s and 1980s, South Africa presented an economic and political project that was at the forefront of the U.S.-led anticommunist assault (Cammack 1990) and, as we have detailed, Israeli arms manufacturers are competing for lucrative border security contracts on the basis of success at a real-life test site, of which Checkpoint 300 is but one example. A profit motive, that which drives research and development investment, is thus much greater than the capital that can circulate within the state and is in fact driven by larger security visions, the U.S.–Mexico wall and suppression of political freedoms in Arab Gulf states among them (Shatz 2021). This does not exonerate the Israeli state from criticism but rather illustrates that the effectiveness (and effects) of oppressive security infrastructure must be understood also as a global form, not one that is wholly endogenous to settler colonialism. Connectedly, a third and final contribution issues from the use of relational comparison as an approach for understanding local exploitation within global structures. Although the base geographies of the two territories discussed are quite different—primarily in terms of time and distance—once the move is made away from empirical to theoretical commonalities there is much that can be taken from scholarly examination of apartheid. It offers a productive frame through which to consider other contexts of segregation, labor, and gender relations—the case of Palestine and Al-Walaja specifically is, unfortunately, one of many such contexts. As we have demonstrated, using this framework is valuable for advancing our understandings of how colonial capitalism functions at a global scale.

A final political word: The broader geography presented here holds potential. It does not deflect criticism of Israel's oppressive security infrastructures, nor does it blur or reduce the object of politics into a vague and inevitable global capitalism. Rather, by excavating the connections between the restrictions placed on Palestinians' lives and global actors, the possibilities for critique and action are opened out to the security hardware companies, policymakers, and

national governments whose complicity consists in entrenching Israel's occupation of Palestine.

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Notes

1. All names used in the article are pseudonyms.
2. See Griffiths and Repo (2018, 2020, 2021).
3. This is evident, for example, in Hart's (2002) account of East Asian clothing companies that established factories in South African industrial zones to exploit cheap cross-border female labor from the Bantustans.
4. See "Transcript of interview with Florence Senna Mongake" (2013). This is taken from The Land Act Legacy Project Collection created by Debora Matthews. In 2013 the South African History Achieve conducted an oral history project exploring the legacies of the 1913 Land Act in three communities (Braklaagte, Driefontein, and Mogopa).
5. See "Transcript of interview with Tshogofatso Motsusi" (2013).
6. This anonymous excerpt is from *Race Relations News*, p. 5, vol. 41 (November 1978), South African Institute of Race Relations.
7. Naomi Setshedi, Tswana, Bophuhatswana, 31 January 1983 (Bozzoli 1991, 212).
8. A logic of disembodied securitization drives the development of technologies but the body, as Hammami (2015) convincingly demonstrated, remains a key site of contestation in the space of the checkpoint.

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