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The Palestinian States of Exception and Agamben

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This paper questions the applicability of Giorgio Agamben's understanding and articulation of the 'State of Exception' concept in the Occupied Palestinian territories. Through a detailed analysis of the Palestinian spatial conditions, it presents the different hierarchies, forms and experiences of exception Palestinians confront in their daily lives. It classifies four States of Exception: the State of Exile and Refuge; the State of Paradox; the State of Occupation and Siege; and the State of Urbicide. A detailed analysis of the States of Occupation, Siege and of Urbicide to demonstrate the several levels and experiences of exception is also presented. These experiences can be noted in phenomena from the legal and juridical framework of the Israeli occupation to the spatial surveillance, to the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of daily life, to the perceptual impacts of Urbicide on people's understanding of self, other and place. An analysis of the Palestinian modus of resilience and resistance is then explored. The paper's main arguments and analyses demonstrate that there are different forms of exception that are not limited to the juridical and legal aspects of Agamben's explanations of the State of Exception. These analyses also reveal how the Palestinians, through their resistance, constitute a real agency in shaping the geometry of the conflict. Agamben presents the State of Exception as the normal state of affairs versus the State of Exception, inside/outside sovereign/*homo sacer*, normal/abnormal, private/public and so on. The State of Exception for him is where an absolute use of power is performed by the sovereign against the victim who has no agency of resistance or rights as all laws are suspended and all notions are confused. It is argued that although these conditions are present in the Palestinian States of Occupation, Siege and Urbicide, using the previous juridical argument of Agamben alone might prove a barrier as it will hinder the understanding of the other hidden tensions and actions that take place within that State of Urbicide. However, it can be stated that there is a Palestinian State of Exception, but the Exception takes different forms and operates with different dynamics. The Palestinian States of Exception entail all aspects of life – not only the juridical and legal – creating multilevels of Exception that perpetually destroys and regenerates itself in an extreme form. Thus, this paper calls for a redefinition of the Palestinian States/Spaces of Exception that can explain this condition in its complicated, interconnected, and interactive layers, forms and dynamics.

Keywords: State of Exception; Agamben; Palestinian spatial condition; Palestinian modus of resistance; Nablus

Palestinian spatial condition and experience of exception

Reading or mapping Palestine and the Palestinians brings into question the countless documents and images that constantly serve as the topography of Palestine and create endless mental images of place and the people. These documents and maps present the

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perpetually transforming conditions of Palestine and the Palestinians from different perspectives: political, territorial, sovereign, and so forth. Following the 1948 War, Palestine was dislocated and reproduced in new places outside Palestine (Figure 1). Since then, it has been a space undergoing continual transformation as its dimensions expand and contract drastically and change. This condition of change constantly creates new realities and relations that neither fit simple categories nor conform to previously encountered forms. The Palestinians are also no longer categorized under

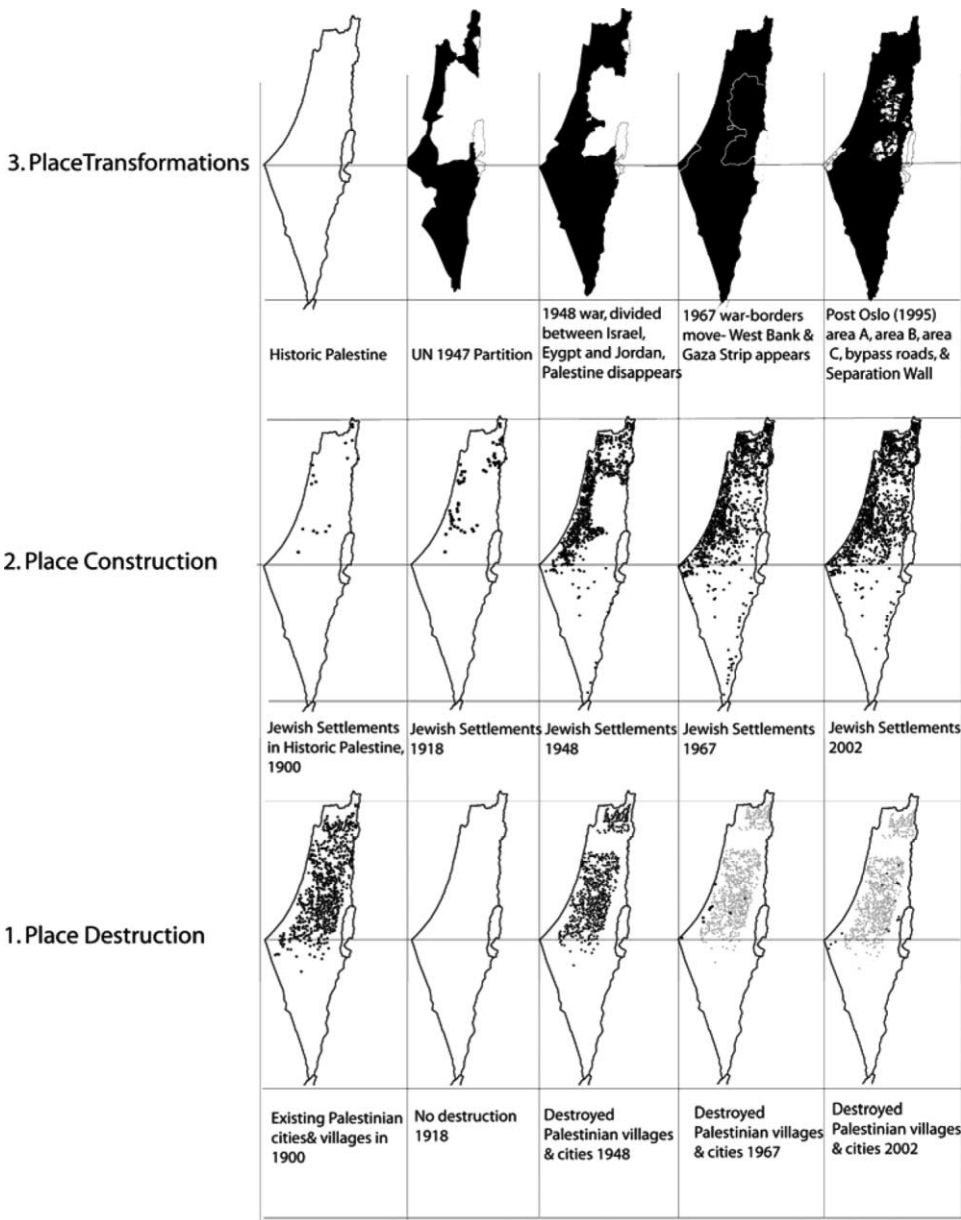


Figure 1. Patterns of place destruction, construction and transformation in Palestine since 1948–2002. Source: author.

the same living conditions; they are either Palestinians who reside inside Israel or the Occupied Territories (*fī-l-dākhil*) or Palestinians who reside in exile (*fī-l-manfa*, *fī-l-khārij* or *fey fī-l-ghurbah*). Thus, it is more useful when discussing Palestine and the Palestinians to define their condition in terms of location and experience as the *Palestinian space*¹ to differentiate it from the geopolitical term 'Palestine'. This Palestinian space refers to the space that encompasses all the sites that host and produce the Palestinian experience. Within this space, boundaries are theorized as rapidly collapsing, shifting and re-emerging.

What is suggested here are four interrelated States or conditions of the Palestinian experience of exception. 'State' here refers more to a state of mind, to a spatial condition and experience rather than to territorial boundaries or a geographical and sovereign area, although it may also refer to such. These States are presented in chronological and order of scale. Yet, this order does not negate the fact that these States are interconnected and frequently renewing themselves in different forms and shapes. For example, the State of Exile, although it presents the Palestinian refugees who were forced out of Palestine in 1948 and 1967, is a condition of exile and refuge that continues today as more Palestinians leave Palestine either by force or through self-imposed exile.

States/Spaces of Exile and Refuge

Disappearance/emergence

The 1948 and 1967 Arab–Israeli Wars with the expulsion, destruction of Palestinian cities, towns and villages, loss of life and exile constituted a concluding chapter that describes and evidences the disappearance of what was once Palestine. Thus, Palestine (or *Filastīn* in Arabic) vanished from the geopolitical map of the Middle East. A new emerging State of Israel was to surface; a new history, urbanity and identity were to be formulated. At the same time, novel Palestinian geospaces were constructed and physically manifested in exile outside, and manifested in refugee camps inside Palestine (Figure 2).

Thus, Palestine became (at least for Palestinians in exile) an idea, a memory of place. 'In this century of course Palestine was "rebuilt", it was "reconstituted", it was "re-established" as the State of Israel in 1948' (Said 1979, p. 2).

This State of Exile and Refuge became an existential and epistemological condition of the Palestinian experience, as a spatial and temporal state of being, belonging, and becoming, in its material and metaphorical contexts.

States/Spaces of Paradox

This state presents the confrontation between the Palestinian space and identity with the Israeli ones. It is very much present in the occupied Palestinian Territories with the Western, modern, well-planned Jewish colonies overlooking the strangled Palestinian urban areas with their vernacular architecture and landscape. It is also present inside the State of Israel itself. Palestinians who managed to remain in their homes in 1948 have acquired Israeli citizenship and live in the paradox of being both Israeli and Palestinian. An Israeli/Palestinian describes this Palestinian experience as: 'Insane. The Jewish Israelis see me as an Arab and enemy despite my papers. Arabs see me as Israeli and enemy because of my papers' (Schulz and Hammer 2003, p. 79).

States/Spaces of Occupation and Siege

The State of Occupation and Siege is experienced by Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza within 'lines' configured following the 1967 ('Six Day') War and the 2002 Israeli reoccupation of the Palestinian Territories. Different levels, intensities, and scales of siege can be recognized in this State and they are discussed in detail below. The mechanisms and dynamics generated by this State of Siege are more evident in the Contiguity/Fragmentation and the Exclaves/Enclaves produced post-Oslo and following the 2002 reoccupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. After the break up of the 2000 Second Intifāḍah, a strict Israeli military cordon was implemented in the occupied Palestinian Territories. An accelerated process of subdividing Palestinian built-up areas into enclaves materialized. These enclaves are defined and manifested by existing Jewish settlements, Jewish bypass roads, and newly constructed Israeli military checkpoints, roadblocks, road gates and the so-called 'Apartheid Wall'. In spatial terms, the Israeli settlement exclaves, or islands, draw the contours for the process of formation and consolidation of Jewish parcels of land in the heart of the Palestinian territoriality, while the subsequent enterprise is to expand and multiply these enclaves as Falah (2003, pp. 182–183) explains. The local Palestinian communities are thus transformed into floating enclaves within the Palestinian territory. The spatial metaphorical reality of these Palestinian enclaves makes them appear as small pockets of land lying outside the main flows and networks shaping the territory, consequently they appear alien even in their own natural setting, and serve to naturalize the presence of their conqueror (Figure 2).

States/Spaces of Urbicide

The fourth spatial condition is the State of Urbicide that presents the extreme condition of the State of Siege. The State of Urbicide is the permanent state of invasion, destruction and extreme strangulation taking place in many Palestinian cities and refugee camps within the State of Occupation and Siege.

The Israeli invasion (begun in March 2002) of the Palestinian territories and the destruction of the Palestinian built environment resulted in the devastation of entire neighbourhoods in many Palestinian cities, towns, and refugee camps. Many of these sites – such as Rafah Refugee camp – have been under strict, even permanent, siege since 2000 and are experiencing acyclic military invasions (see the forms of military invasion in Nablus Old City below).

The Israeli military invasion and destruction campaigns had four primary targets:

- Palestinian symbols of power: by targeting Ramallah city and the destruction of PNA ministries, police and military stations.
- Palestinian symbols of resistance 'the myth of Palestinian resistance': Nablus Old City, Jenin refugee camp, Rafah refugee camp and Balata refugee camps are well-known examples.
- Palestinian symbols of identity: manifested in historic cities and cultural heritage sites. The old centres of Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem were heavily damaged during these invasions.
- Palestinian symbols of the right of return and the mark of the Palestinian *Nakbah* (that is, the 'calamity' of 1948) represented in the refugee camps that had already been targets of several Israeli campaigns since the 1970s.

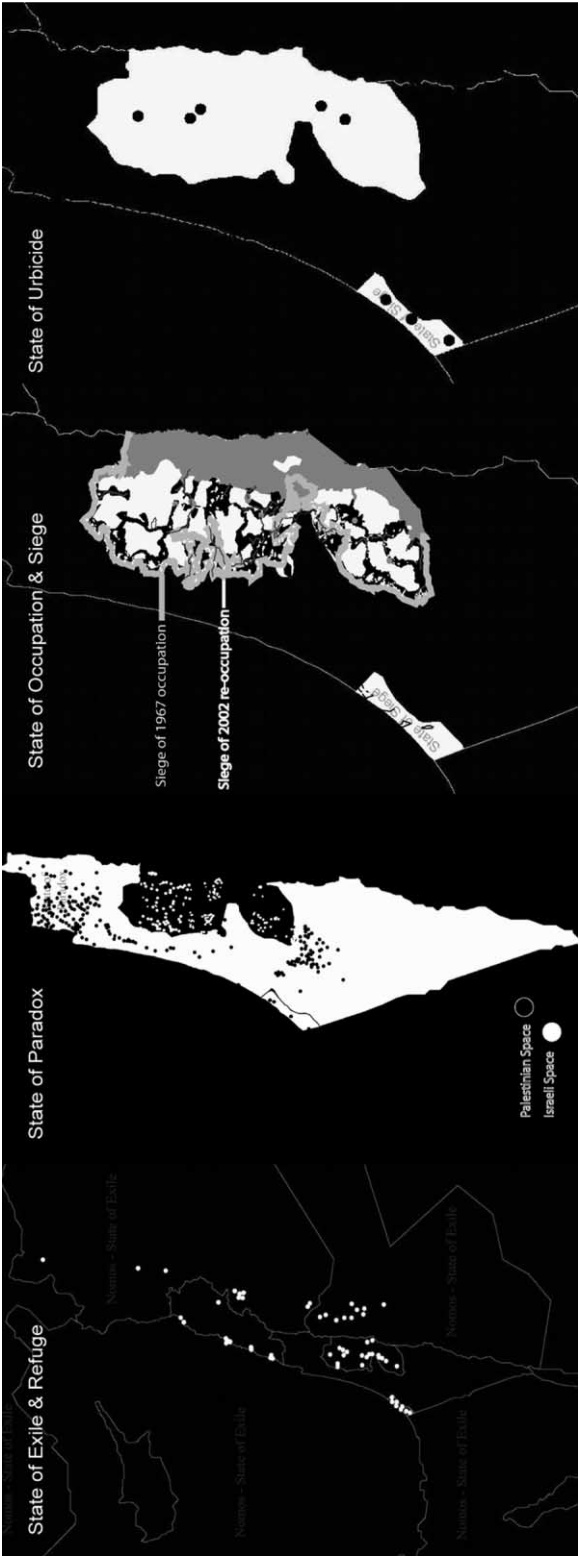


Figure 2. Palestinian States/Spaces of Exception. Source: author.

Levels or forms of exception that exist in the States of Urbicide and Siege: the case of Nablus City

The second part of this paper focuses on two of the Palestinian spatial conditions of exception – the State of Siege and its extreme form of permanent invasion and strangulation: the State of Urbicide. The discussion of this part will take Nablus City in the period 2002–2005 as a case study. The author has elected to study the State of Urbicide in detail first because it draws the contours of an extreme experience of exception. The other Palestinian States/Spaces of Exception reside within the boundaries of the State of Urbicide. For example, Nablus City is a strong example of the State of Urbicide in which the State of Exile and Refuge is represented in its three major Palestinian refugee camps (Balāṭah, ‘Askar and Bayt Elmah camps). Nablus, as the stronghold of Palestinian resistance, also presents the State of Occupation and Siege, being within the boundaries of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and being under strict military siege and a place where the Israeli military surveillance system is extensively implemented. Thus, studying Nablus City enables one to understand the several Palestinian Spaces of Exception in one representative model. Here, the author will not analyse the material and spatial destruction patterns which are the stakes of Urbicide as they are not relevant for the discussion of this paper.²

Nablus is located 65 km north of Jerusalem and is the largest city in the West Bank. Its strategic location makes it a major focal point and hub between a number of Palestinian cities and villages. The city is also the trading centre for the region and the economic capital of Palestine. Nablus and its environs have been inhabited for more than 5000 years – as far back as Canaanite times. The existing structure of the historic centre of Nablus is characteristic of the typical old Arab Islamic city. This is clearly manifest in the structure and pattern of its streets, its network of alleys, its domes, vaulted houses, and *sūqs* (marketplaces). Despite the numerous and substantial social and political changes throughout the ages, the pattern of the Roman city built in AD72 can still be detected in some sections of the city and its buildings. Nablus is famous for its cultural heritage, embedded in the public buildings spread over its six traditional quarters. Over the past six years Nablus has demonstrably borne the heaviest Israeli military attacks in the Palestinian Territories.

Different levels or forms of exception emerge when one maps the Palestinian condition of exception. Those forms present themselves in every aspect of Palestinian daily life, from the laws that regulate people’s lives, to the geospatial aspect of Israeli control that reaches as far as the collective experience of self, place, space and other.

Legal and juridical terms

Many laws have been promulgated since the Israeli Occupation of 1967 to enforce the occupation machine. These include the ‘emergency laws’ passed in 1945 by the British against the Jews and Arabs; Law 124 which gives the military governor the right – this time under the pretext of ‘security’ – to suspend all citizens’ rights, including freedom of movement: the army need only declare a zone forbidden ‘for security reasons’ and an Arab no longer has the right to go onto his land without the authorization of the military governor. The State of Israel has consistently applied these laws against the Arab population, and to justify the keeping of these laws of terror in effect, the ‘state of emergency’ has not been formally lifted since 1948. Many other laws were also developed such as planning laws for Palestinian cities and villages, military laws,

curfew laws, invasion laws, military permission cards, ownership and construction regulations and other laws which are detailed further below.

Spatial surveillance and control

There is an entire Israeli surveillance system around the Occupied Territories and every Palestinian city, village or camp. The Israeli surveillance network functions on different scales, from the territorial to the urban, and extends to the level of neighbourhood and even single houses during times of military invasions. Since the early 1980s, Israel has developed a strategy of control over the key nodes of Palestinian spatial and physical structures. A network of strategic 'points' was established around main Palestinian urban areas, manifest in settlements, checkpoints, army bases, and industrial parks; these points are connected by the 'lines' of the massive system of highways and bypass roads, and the Apartheid Wall is seen as a border line; one might hypothesize that this Apartheid Wall embodies a 'permanent State of Exception' manifested as an 'exceptional' barrier. The eastern edge of the West Bank, declared by the Israeli authorities to be a combat zone and 'closed military area', can be seen as an edge surface of the territories. The layout of this network of points, lines, and surface compose what has been defined by Jeff Halper as the 'matrix of control' (Halper, 1999). The physical network reflects the visible physical material layer of the matrix. The other two layers are invisible, projected first by the military laws imposed on the Palestinian Territories since 1967 and, second, through the use of force – the Occupation itself (Figures 3–5). The physical network is composed of two types of systems: permanent and temporary. Although both originate from the same logic and elements, the scale, nature, and mechanism differ in each case. The permanent matrix is structured around fixed points and lines represented by Israeli Jewish settlements, Israeli military checkpoints, Israeli dumps, Israeli industrial parks, Israeli military bases, Israeli-only bypass roads, and holy places.

The temporary physical network of control is implemented at the city, subdistrict, or neighbourhood level. It is intensified during 'temporary'³ Israeli military incursions into Palestinian cities, in this case Nablus. This network is often assigned to secure control within target areas; it is made up of military outposts, sniper positions, gates, dividing lines, temporary checkpoints within the city borders, and temporary buffer zones (Figures 6 and 7).

The nexus between the temporary physical networks of control and the permanent territorial/urban networks generates a total Israeli military administration of the Palestinian physical and spatial structure.

Socio-cultural and economic dis-/reconfiguration

The third level of exception experience in the Palestinian spatial condition of Urbicide reconfigured the Nabulsi socio-cultural and economic patterns. Several Nabulsi-cultural customs have been affected by the frequent invasions and destruction of the Old City; 60% of the interviewed sample in Nablus Old Town pointed out that their social network has been strongly affected by the continuous siege of the city. Their deteriorating economic situation makes it impossible for them to meet some of the demands of social activities. For example, important social occasions and festivities have been called off in many Nabulsi homes.⁴ Other cultural and economic patterns are also changing and sometimes diminishing within the Old City. 'Al-Sūq Nāzil', the

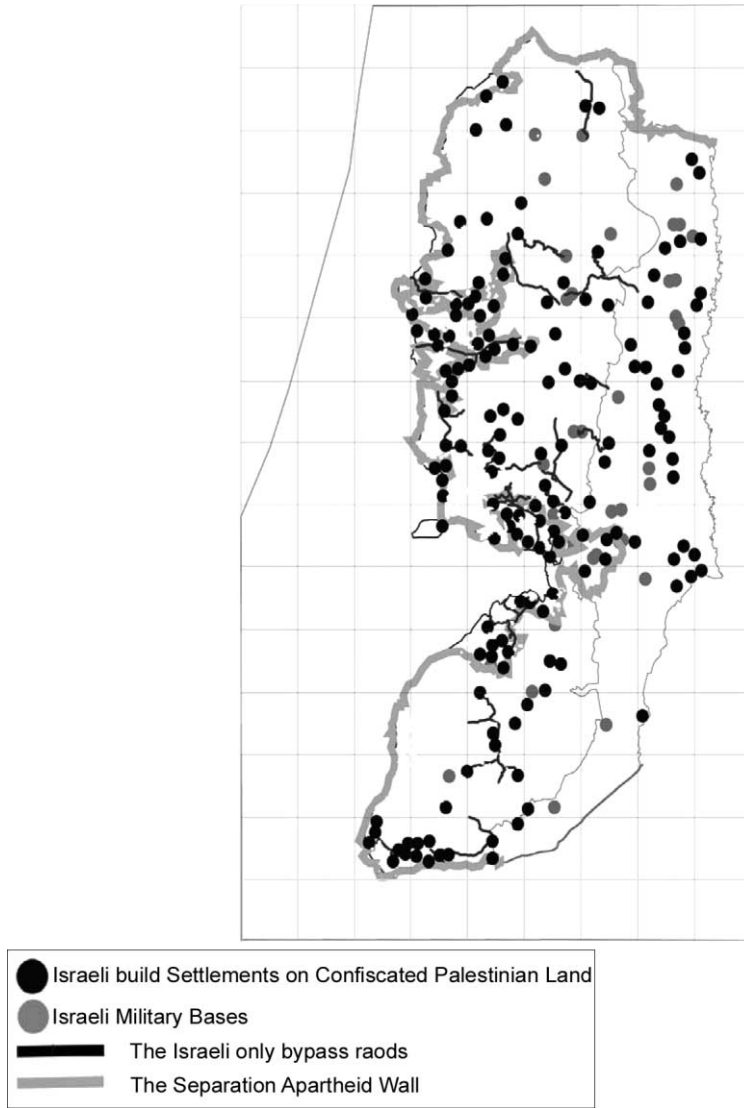


Figure 3. Abstract map of the physical elements of the Israeli network of control in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank), The Settlements, the By-pass roads, and the Apartheid Wall (urbicide by construction). Source: author, adapted from <http://www.B'tselem.org/reportsandmaps/>.

Ramaḍān shopping traditions, have been missed in the last five years. Palestinian cultural identity has lost important aspects of its essence manifested not only in the destruction of the cultural artefact and the built environment, but also in the deprivation that has extended to the loss of important cultural and social customs and traditions.

From the centre to the margin

Nablus played a central role in the Occupied Palestinian Territories before the second Intifada. It used to be the economic centre where major trade and mercantile activities



Figure 4. Abstract map of the dynamics of control in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank) that exemplifies the invisible layer of the Israeli physical network of control (urbicide by control, missing the location of the checkpoints). Source: author adapted from <http://www.B'tselem.org/>.

took place. All agricultural production from the northern villages traditionally used to arrive first in Nablus central market where it was subsequently redistributed to other Palestinian cities. The Israeli military invasions and strict siege around the city since 2000 cut off Nablus from its hinterland and the surrounding villages. Consequently, other minor commercial centres emerged in the surrounding villages such as Tubas.

Nablus was the main transportation hub linking the northern governorates of Jenin, Tūlkarim, and Qalqīlyā with the central governorates of Ramallah and Jerusalem. Until 2001, one public transportation centre in Nablus provided service to and from all northern governorates, as well as Ramallah to the south. Upon the implementation of heightened closure policies in 2001, it became difficult for travellers from the north to reach Nablus. A system of permits and restricted roads continues to limit the movement of people and goods. The Apartheid Wall has made access to Israeli

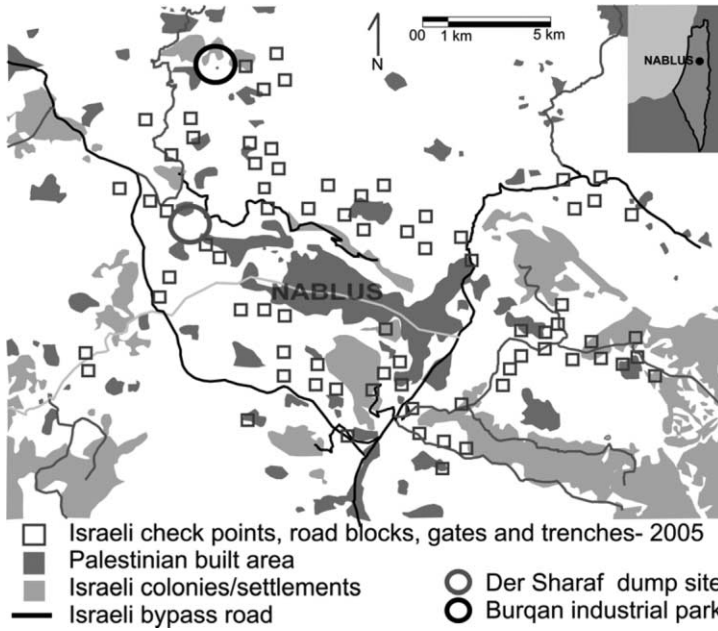


Figure 5. Location of the Israeli physical network of control points around Nablus area. Source: author, readapted from B'tselm and UNOCHA maps, 2005.

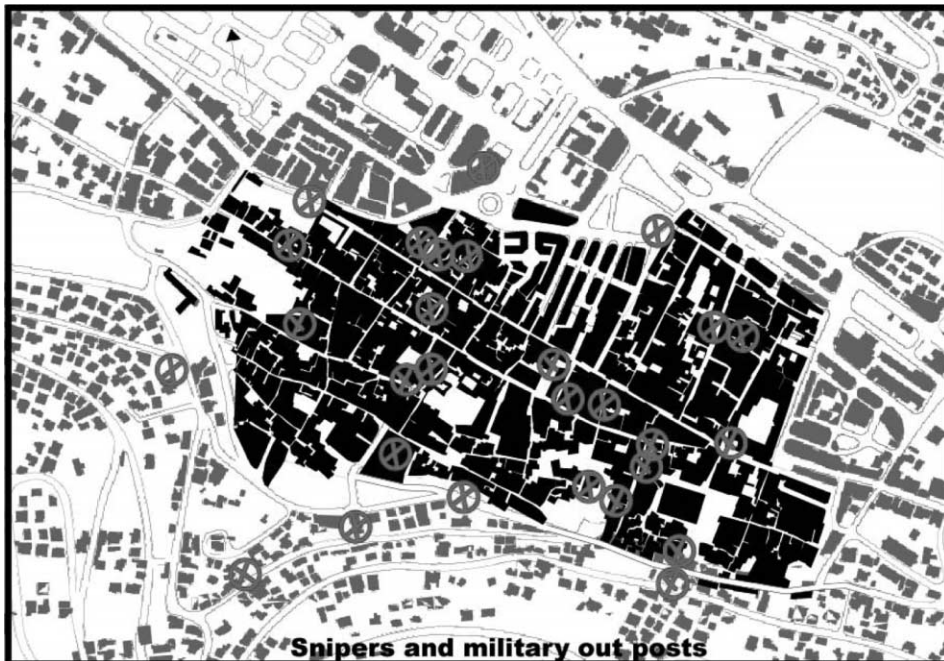


Figure 6. Location of snipers and military outposts in Nablus Old town, April 2002. Source: author, constructed from filed work interviews.

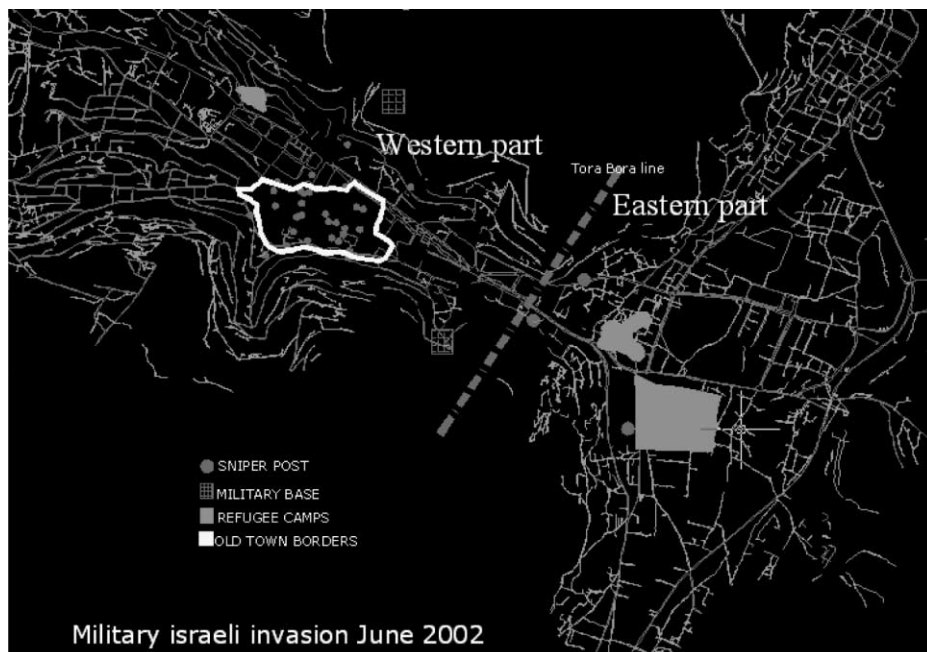


Figure 7. Dividing Nablus City into different section during the Israeli military invasion June 2002. Source: reconstructed from the author's field interviews and from Palestinian and Israeli newspapers' descriptions, 2002 (such as, Al-jezeera.net, Alquds.com, *Ha'aretz*, *Maarive* and *Ye'diot Achronot* daily news).

markets for Nablus goods more difficult. In addition, 'flying checkpoints' often appear at unexpected times or places, forcing travellers to wait between a few minutes and several hours, sometimes making it impossible to reach the final destination on the same day. Required travel times have tripled – and that excludes delays at checkpoints and impassable road sections that must be traversed by foot (Figure 9).

Personal experiences and perceptions of self, other, and place/space

Inverted realities and normalized exception

The fourth Experience of Exception is present manifestly in the Palestinian transformations of perceptions of self, other and place. The frequent Israeli invasions, destruction, curfews and strict sieges changed, distorted, and inverted the inhabitants' experience of their city. These events change what has come to be considered 'normal' since the beginning of the Israeli Occupation. Since the 1948 and 1967 wars, Palestinians within and outside the Palestinian Territories have lived in a permanent State of Exile from what was once 'Palestine'. This experience of estrangement is further reinforced by the state of emergency imposed since the establishment of the State of Israel. This state of emergency (originating from the aforementioned British laws of 1945) regulates and subjugates the Palestinian people's notion of normal life, an experience that hinders their differentiation between normal and emergency, civil and military, public and private space. This new extreme and exaggerated exception is evident in the collective experience of detention, death, and long periods of curfew,

house raids, shelling, and building demolition. This extreme is realized in an existence of bare survival, living on the edge, where human rights and dignity no longer exist and profound 'existential humiliation' is a recurrent experience:

When all is said and all is done, sovereign power is the control of bare life: the authority over the citizen's life and death, a concept expressed in the State of Exception. [...] Hence the sovereign power not only upholds the law, but also, and above all else, maintains the right to suspend the law and declare the State of Exception. (De Cauter 2005, p. 156, citing Agamben 1998)

The exception of the curfews and daily invasions has been slowly normalized through lengthy experience and frequent reoccurrence. Thus, when these conditions disappear from the city the inhabitants perceive it as an exception to the normal. This is strongly expressed in their experience during Ramaḍān:

Yesterday evening after *iftār* (the breaking of the fast) we wandered around the markets. The last time I was here the city centre streets were deserted at nine o'clock, but now they were bustling and noisy and people looked relaxed and happy. 'The Israelis do not come in so much during Ramaḍān,' said my friend as we were browsing for presents. Despite the apparent peace he did not let me out of his sight. 'What will happen after Ramaḍān?' I asked him.

He smiled. 'They will come in every night again like they do the rest of the year. It will go back to normal.' *Normal* in Nablus is that. (Palestine monitors, between sieges in Nablus, 9 October 2007)

Domestic space as military domain

The notion of privacy disappears during times of invasion as public and private are reconfigured by military *fiat*. A private house can be the target of a search operation, can be used for interrogation, or can be transformed arbitrarily into a 'temporary' military outpost – challenging notions of ownership and privacy on the grounds of 'security'. The Israeli Army has a unique power immediately to transform any portion of urban or rural space by declaring it a 'military area'. Giorgio Agamben describes this issue in his definition of the State of Exception:

It is obvious that we frequently can no longer differentiate between what is private and what public, and that both sides of the classical opposition appear to be losing their reality. The State of Exception consists, not least, in the neutralization of this distinction. (Agamben 2004, p. 612)

Many public buildings, such as schools and mosques, are transformed into temporary shelters for the city's displaced inhabitants. Another issue is the curfew laws that confine people to the interior of their houses, regulating the use of public space outside. They also restrain the use of private houses, making looking from a window or sitting on a balcony a risk in itself. Thus, here the most intimate private space is invaded and redefined:

Go inside, he ordered in hysterical broken English. Inside! I am already inside! It took me a few seconds to understand that this young soldier was redefining inside to mean anything that is not visible, to him at least. My being 'outside' within the 'inside' was bothering him. Not only is he imposing a curfew on me, he is also redefining what is outside and what is inside within my own private sphere. (Khouri 2004)

During invasions and military operations the inhabitants of the city can undergo traumatic experiences by witnessing events of shelling, house demolition, and confinement. For example, the experience of positioning military posts and snipers in family homes was extremely painful for all family members. Feelings of humiliation and anger, loss of dignity, privacy, and ownership – all come in a moment and leave their traces in the memory:

It was more than I could bear to think of them using our bathrooms, or opening my drawers and searching and messing our clothes or personal items. ... Total strangers, they have access to all the rooms ... they help themselves to all of our belongings; they see themselves in our mirrors and use our sheets and towels. In a way, it was almost being violated: our private lives and intimate secrets had been forcibly opened to strangers, and we were utterly helpless to do anything about it ... feeling hopeless and helpless hurts. It hurts mentally and physically. (Abu Shumais 2004)

In such times of emergency, the city is forced to surrender its urban accoutrements and imitates the life of a refugee camp, transformed into an enclave beyond any juridical sphere. Spatial normalcy and legal structure are, in effect, ‘suspended’ within the temporal frame created by an invasion. Palestinian private space has been intruded upon and targeted, not only to destroy people’s sense of place and privacy, as Falah and Flint (2004) have argued, but as part of the larger Israeli-Palestinian struggle over land and water. Sovereignty over space is an important element in achieving geopolitical aims intrinsic to the longer-term policy imperative within the geopolitical colonial imaginary that guides the Israeli nation-state.

Threat is constant where spatiality is completely invaded and constantly open to unexpected violation without notice. Palestinians thus live in a state of perpetual uncertainty, never knowing what the day will bring: only that whatever happens, they will be almost totally powerless against it.

Confined imaginaries and geographies

The permanent siege around Nablus City since 2000, and the restriction on mobility, has prevented many Palestinians, especially the younger generation, from leaving their city for a long time and sometimes from *ever* leaving it. The impacts of forced city arrests have been such that the younger generation’s perception and imagination of the outer spaces, cities and the world in general was very abstract and limited. Lina Jamoul explains this phenomenon and calls it:

the colonization of mind that is present through the repeated and sole experience of stop, search, check ID, keep you waiting for hours, possibly hurl abuse at you, possibly rough you up and maybe, eventually, let you pass. There is no other way to travel. (Jamoul, 2004, p. 4)

Even the local population’s collective memory of their own city becomes distorted and sometimes erased. During the survey and in the mental image reconstruction exercise conducted by the author, many children from the Al Qaryun quarter were asked to draw sketches from memory of the Old City in Nablus before the invasion. The result was shocking. Not only could they not remember what the damaged areas had originally looked like, they were unable to express *anything other than damage* – depicting shootings, explosions, and ruins in their sketches.⁵ Thus, destruction has become the new milieu of memory for future Nabulsi generations (Figure 8).

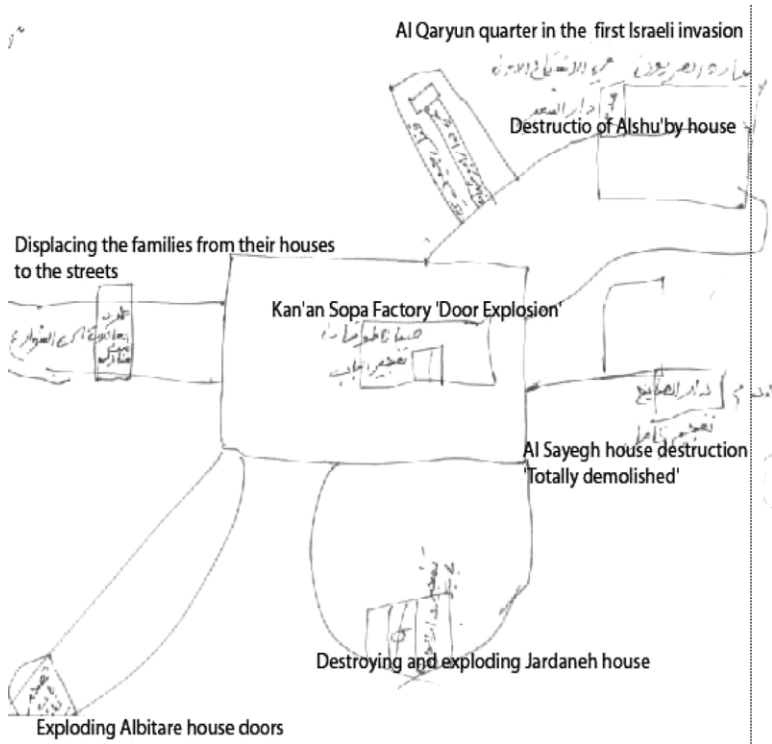


Figure 8. Mental map of Nablus Old Town drawn by Alqaryun children. Source: author field work data and interviews

Palestinian resilience dynamics

This section will present examples or snapshots from Palestinian resistance and resilience dynamics. Its aim is to demonstrate how knowledge means power. When Palestinians develop improved knowledge of Israeli surveillance mechanisms, they can break the system and get through in order to go on with their daily lives. In this part of the analysis, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that the Palestinians are active agents in the struggle and not passive recipients of the aggressive Israeli military occupation.

Resilience through knowledge

Considering Palestinian resistance dynamics (here the focus is on civil, social resistance and not armed resistance) entails understanding how such resistance develops in the extreme conditions explained in previous sections. This resilience and resistance can be seen at different levels of Palestinian daily life.

The absolute use and experience of Israeli colonial power reached into the very depths of Palestinian individuals having become engrained in them and having touched their bodies and been inserted into their actions and attitudes, discourse, learning processes and everyday lives.⁶ The daily experience of the Israeli military surveillance and control networks have enabled the Palestinians unconsciously to map – mentally – the patterns and rhythms generated by the control network. This has led to the formulation of a strategy or tactic for infiltrating the system of control, depending on which system is

encountered – be it a checkpoint, the Wall or something else. An example of this is Areej H.'s experience and encounter with the paradox of the strict siege and surveillance system on a daily basis that has enabled her to break through to the Israeli cities to enjoy some normality in her life;⁷ Gidon Levei describes this in his article in *Ha'aretz*:

... I go to one of the Jerusalem checkpoints and try to pass. Why, I don't know. It could be that at those times you need to do something crazy to regain some of your internal balance, and in my case the craziest thing ever is to challenge the so-called 'Israeli security and checkpoints system.' Success is 100 percent: Each time I tried to pass, I passed not only to Jerusalem, but also to Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa and Nazareth. My passport was my curly hair and the Giorgio Armani sunglasses that I bought only for the checkpoints, and guesses what? I believe the \$300 investment was worth it. It is so funny that I cannot see my family in Gaza for years, while I spend most of the summer swimming in Tel Aviv or having fun in Jerusalem. What a brilliant security system! In case you feel like knowing more about this issue, please let me know. (Levei 2008)

Resilience through continuing daily activities

On-street classes

During 'Operation Defensive Shield' in 2002, six out of the nine schools in and around Nablus Old City were subject to destruction. In an act of rejection and resistance in the face of the destruction of the city, many teachers held their classes in the street to show that the power of life is much stronger than the machine of destruction and death (Figure 9).

Rabāb Abdulhadi describes how school children challenged the 100-day curfew during July–December 2003:

Children (including my own nephew Ibrahim and nieces Widād, Nūrā, and Nadā who live in the eastern part beyond Tora Bora) have been risking their lives to get to school to take their final exams. (Abdulhadi 2003)

Resilience through commemoration

The remembrance of wars, victories and defeats is a prime act of collective affirmation of nations. Monuments, cemeteries and stories are constructed, and these processes of



Figure 9. On street classes near Nablus Old Town entrances post-2002 Israeli. Military invasion and the destruction of several schools. Courtesy: Nablus Municipality Archives.

commemoration serve to construct the identity of individuals and peoples. This can be observed in the Palestinian martyrdom discourse that is now extended to everyday activities and social rituals. The inhabitants celebrate and commemorate the tragic outcomes of the invasion and the killing of Palestinian resistance members, converting the city into a huge graveyard, a macro-space of struggle and national identity. Places where key resistance fighters were assassinated are converted symbolically into commemorative monuments. Commemoration stones inscribed with poetry of sorrow and heroism are placed on the facades of buildings and posters depicting martyrs cover almost all of the Old City's walls (Figure 10).

The city that is typically a celebration of life becomes the embattled arena for continual commemorations of the now unending event of death.

Resilience through rebuilding/renovating

The efforts of clearing out debris, repairing infrastructure and renovating destroyed buildings in the Old City can be seen as a form of resilience despite the fact that the quality of these projects did not diminish the heritage's authenticity. The quality and importance of these projects lies in sustaining life in the city and in making the city function again as a healthy urban centre by removing all garbage, rotten vegetables, meat, and of course clearing out the dead and injured bodies.

Rebuilding and renovating can also be seen as an act of resistance and protest against the destruction of people's cultural identity. This point was strongly present in the interviews conducted in the Old City. Almost all the respondents stressed the point that the Old City should be renovated exactly as it was before its destruction, using the same architectural style, building material, and finishing elements. The inhabitants' struggle with both nostalgic and conflicting images of the future was also detected. All manner of nostalgic and sentimentalized recollection was unleashed. So were personal memories of the 'good old days'. Conflicting ideas about how the city should look in the future surfaced. One of the respondent stated: 'it is a war of heritage; we should sustain our cultural sites as a tool of struggle against occupation' (Saleh, interview, 15 August 2005) This type of narrative demonstrates people's political awareness as well as engagement. The rebuilding of the Old City in particular carried emotional symbolism for the Nabulsi as for them it represents the centre of Palestinian resistance.

Reconstruction dynamics are also perceived to bring hope and attachment to life, despite the tremendous loss. Rebuilding cannot be done without optimism. In the events of Urbicide many people inside the Old City have lost their property which they conceived as their life's investment: its loss signifies the loss of life and descent into despair.

The Palestinian States/Spaces of Exception and Agamben

The previous analysis demonstrated that Agamben's understanding of the State of Exception partially explains the conditions experienced within the Palestinian States of Siege and Urbicide. However, his approach does not have the capacity to be the only tool to map and explain the Palestinian spaces of exception. Agamben's juridical definition of the State of Exception hinders the explanation of the other forms and exceptions of the Palestinians' experience in their other Spaces/State of Paradox, Exile/Refuge, Occupation/Siege and the State of Urbicide. At the same time this limitation to law and juridical issues does not afford the opportunity of analysing the



Figure 10. Commemoration stones and poster for key Palestinians resistance martyrs killed by the Israeli army spread nearly all over Nablus Old Town facades. The caption in the first stone requests passers-by to read the *fātiḥah* (Kitā'ib Shuhadā' al-Aqṣā) (opening *sūrah* of the Qur'ān) for the dead of al-Aqṣā Martyrs' Brigade, followed by a list of names, and concluding with the following text: 'When men die ... men ... words are rendered mute. ... Do not accept condolences [for the dead], and do not lower your heads, but rather store up anger and fire a bullet in the face of every traitor. They are

deserters, but we will remain. ... We are a community (*ummaḥ*) like an ear of corn – whenever a grain falls from it, it returns to the earth to multiply anew'. The caption in the second stone reads in rhymed verse: 'When our rifles start to play [their melody], then the truth begins to speak and the unjust begins to feel pain'. Photographs: author.

other forms and levels of exception that might be generated within the different State/Spaces of Exception; as discussed, the Experience of Exception is present in every aspect of the Palestinian spatial condition that goes beyond any juridical discussion. It was revealed in the Israeli military surveillance network and the reconfiguration of Palestinian spaces, the reconfiguration of the socio-cultural and economic dimensions, extending to the personal experience and perceptions of self, other and space.

The other limitation of Agamben's State of Exception is its distinction between two actors, victim versus victimizer; powerful versus. powerless. Following Foucault's principle of power – that there is no such thing as two opposite classes,

one with power and one without, for the simple reason that power is not a possession but an action – this paper's analysis rejects both the notion of the all-powerful sovereign and the powerless victim. Palestinians, through politics, civil or armed struggle,⁸ have also shaped the realities of the conflict and their resistance has been powerful and effective as the previous sections have illustrated. It is therefore important to use other theories and methods to understand the Palestinian colonized spatial condition. For example, Foucault's theory of power and microphysics might provide us with a very interesting and powerful technique that permits deconstruction of the Israeli cogwheel⁹ of occupation (that is composed of the Jewish settlements projects, the surveillance network, the destruction and demolition exercise, the military laws, the land confiscation and other) into its distinct parts which enables a better understanding of its mechanisms and impacts.

Fragmentation of space and time

The Israeli colonial project in the Occupied Territories is articulated here as a cogwheel composed of several components (Figure 11) that make it possible for Israel to enforce its occupation project: the Jewish settlements, the surveillance network, the demolition and destruction of Palestinian neighbourhoods and houses, the military laws and so forth.¹⁰ The surveillance network, for example, is composed of five elements. First, there is the Wall itself that encloses and consists of a network of barriers, including 10-foot walls topped with barbed wire and guard towers and employing motion detectors and video cameras. This Wall often prevents Palestinians from engaging in normal activities such as tending their crops, going to school or to the hospital and visiting their family that happen to be on the other side of the Israeli-constructed barrier.

Second, there is the territorial subdivision into zones A, B or C.¹¹ This zoning demonstrates that the matter of statehood is ultimately seen as one of occupation where the fragmentation of space and time reaches a level where these very small interwoven spaces/enclaves have their own rules of movement, construction, military laws and checkpoints. This type of fragmentation also follows arbitrary Israeli military law,

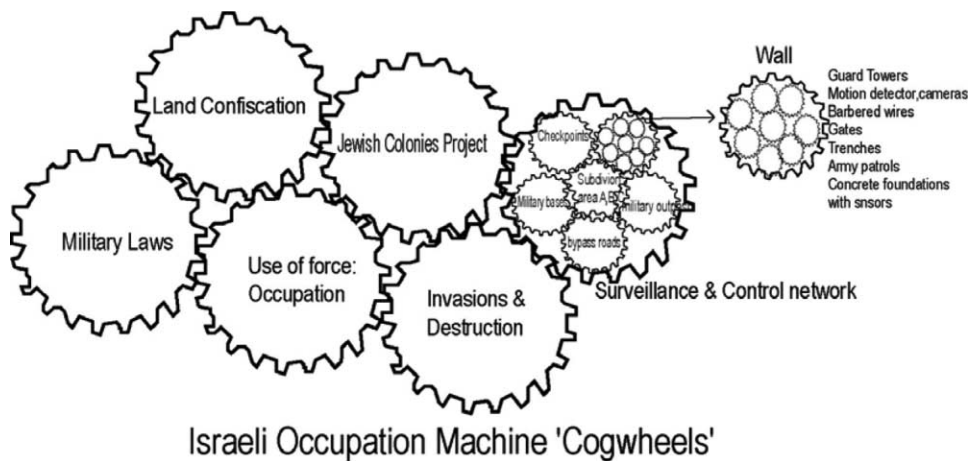


Figure 11. The Israeli occupation cogwheels that enable the Israeli colonial project to be enforced in the occupied Palestinian Territories. Source: author.

during times of invasion and State of Urbicide. The Military Correspondent for *Ha'aretz* reported in April that 'there is [now] only one area and that area is controlled by the IDF without Palestinian intermediaries'. 'As far as the military was concerned', Amir Oren explained, 'there was no longer any difference between Areas A, B and C: The IDF is doing as it pleases in all of them.'

The third cogwheel is comprised of checkpoints and the sniper towers.

The fourth cogwheel is indicative of the Israeli-only bypass roads.

The fifth cogwheel is that of administrative rules (Occupied Territories). These rules contribute enormously to the arbitrariness that settles into the lives of Palestinians and makes their daily routine or life-projects intractable if not impossible tasks to manage. For instance, prohibition to work on the land during a few weeks for 'security reasons'; or the administrative rule that decrees that if land (for instance, olive groves) is not harvested for two years, it becomes state land, that is, Israeli land; or the decisions taken at checkpoints, letting persons through or not. These deformations also involve deliberate twisting – torsions – of both time and space through the uncertainties that Palestinians' lives traverse:

Temporariness is now the law of the occupation ... temporary takeover of Area A, temporary withdrawal from Area A, temporary encirclement and temporary closures, temporary transit permits, temporary revocation of transit permits, temporary enforcement of an elimination policy, temporary change in the open-fire orders ... When the Occupier plays with time like this, everything – everything that moves, everything that lives – becomes dependent on the arbitrariness of the Occupier's decisions. The Occupier is fully aware that he is always playing on borrowed time, in fact on stolen time, other people's time. This Occupier is an unrestrained, almost boundless sovereign, because when everything is temporary almost anything – any crime, any form of violence – is acceptable, because the temporariness seemingly grants it a license, the license of the state of emergency. (Ophir 2002, p. 60)

This multidimensional system of the Israeli military surveillance network generates new forms of colonialism; it is a post-modern attempt to control all dimensions of space, transforming the Palestinian Occupied Territories into the largest spatial laboratory of the 21st century.

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Notes

1. This form of categorization was also developed for a different argument by Ismā'īl Sheik Hassan (2005).
2. For an elaborate analysis of the concept of Urbicide and its material and spatial patterns, see Abujidi and Verschure (2006).
3. It was announced as temporary but is turning out to be the rule, projected in the regular invasions into Palestinian cities, especially the Nablus area.
4. The Holy month's gatherings, through the two months preceding Ramaḍān, Sha'bāniyah, the gathering of Sha'bān month, where the head of the family tends to gather all the women

in his family to spend a few days in the family house, sometimes limited to one central dinner. The same can be reported for the two major feasts in the Nabulsi Muslim community, celebrations are now limited to family visits that sometimes do not take place when they coincide with the Israeli military invasion of the city and the strict curfew.

5. The adult interviewees' mental maps of the city before the invasion accorded strongly with the real pre-invasion urban fabric, although references to the damaged buildings are still much in evidence in the discourse.
6. Following Foucault (1980, p. 39) on this issue.
7. This example is not meant to preset that all Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories break through the surveillance network to have some entertainment, but to describe some moments of despair. Normally, Palestinians will try to infiltrate the Israeli surveillance network seeking work, medication or education.
8. Note that the Israeli colonial power is no way equal to the Palestinian resistance power.
9. A toothed wheel that engages another toothed mechanism in order to change the speed or direction of transmitted motion.
10. This discussion is developed on the basis of Benedikt Zitouni's lecture to Erasmus mundus UII students on 'The Israeli Wall and Microphysics', 24 May 2008.
11. See the maps from Foundation for Peace in the Middle East, *Oslo Outlining Area A, B and C*, and Map Square vzw, *Time suspended*, <http://www.squarevzw.be>, 2006, and Le Monde Diplomatique, carte fragmentée.

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