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BLUEPRINTS OF THE NATION: CONSTRUCTING SPACES OF RIGHTS AND REFUGEE RETURN IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE

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Chapter 1. Blueprints for Rights & Redress in Israel-Palestine

In September 2011, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas addressed the United Nation's General Assembly (UNGA) to advance Palestine's bid for statehood (A/66/PV.19). After noting Israel's refusal to restart negotiations, the growing settlement-building enterprise, as well as the continued siege on Gaza, Abbas urged members of the international community to recognize Palestinians' inalienable national rights by admitting them into statehood. As he finished, UN representatives in New York rose in unison for a prolonged standing ovation.

Heralding this historic moment, officials from the Palestinian National Authority added pomp to the spectacle by unveiling a giant blue chair, meant to symbolize Palestine's future seat at the United Nations, and displaying it in the center of Ramallah's busy Al-Manara roundabout. Crafted from olive wood and measuring 8-9 meters high, the sky-blue fixture emblazoned with the words "Palestine's Right" towered over the many celebratory parades held during the lead up to Abbas's speech in New York.

Figure 1 Setting Up the Blue Chair For a Rally in Ramallah Prior to Abbas's Speech (2011/CC-by-SA)

But neither the furniture theatrics nor the lofty reception given at the UN could conceal the decidedly more skeptical views expressed by many Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). I joined a friend, Rana, to watch a live broadcast of Abbas's address at a busy café near Damascus Gate in occupied East Jerusalem. As we listened along with the rest of the crowd, we both noted the muted reception among the café's patrons, who greeted Abbas's words with a mix of stony silence and half-hearted applause. The strained mood in the café stood in sharp contrast to the jubilant parade of statehood festivities that had been orchestrated earlier that day. Finally, in an attempt to lighten the mood, the café owner wondered aloud if people would be more inclined to celebrate had he only painted the outdoor chairs blue. Nodding in mock approval, Rana joked: "See, now we have become the 'People of the Chair'! Too bad no one mentioned earlier that you could resist occupation with seat cushions." Listening to this exchange, another patron mused, "maybe if we build a Palestinian Ikea, the right of return will finally be recognized!"

By the following day, the oversized facsimile of the UN's stately blue throne had received almost as much media attention as Abbas's hyped address to the UNGA. The chair – a kind of vacant cathedra – seemed to unintentionally capture the empty promise of proclaiming "statehood" without possessing either the seat of sovereignty or territorial contiguity. For many Palestinians living under occupation, this apparent fixation on symbolic gestures, such as the blue chair, came at the expense of securing the conditions under which collective rights could be meaningfully exercised. As Rana pointedly asked at the end of the televised oration: "Can anyone explain what good a fictional state is to me if my real home can be demolished tomorrow? How does it help anyone to have a state with no freedom of movement, no passports, no airport…just a lousy chair?"

By making explicit the breach between, on the one hand, the promise of a fictitious nation-state, and on the other hand, the existing spatial reality of occupation, these kinds of jokes and narratives call attention to the material conditions that undergird any claim to national rights. At the same time, the discontent expressed by Rana and the other cafegoers gave voice to widespread frustration with not only Abbas's speech, but also with the broader political project of the ruling Palestinian National Authority (PA). For many Palestinians, the PA's commitment to performative state-building, embodied in its embrace of symbolic displays such as the big blue chair, has failed to deliver improvements in daily life. Worse yet, it has come at the expense of reckoning with the immediate exigencies of occupation, statelessness, and expanded settlement building in the oPt.

1. Statehood and the Stateless in Palestine-Israel

Palestine-Israel is a challenging, but also richly informative, site for thinking through the problems of statelessness, spatial politics, and international human rights. Few conflicts have been as distinguished by "astute attention to law and legal controversy" as the Israel-Palestine conflict (Erakat 2019, 2). In fact, the question of Palestine has beset the United Nations and the international community almost from the outset of its establishment. As the United Nation's Public Relations office wrote in 2008, "no issue has engaged the international community over the past half century" more than what has become known as the "Question of Palestine" (United Nations 2008, iii). Member states have debated and passed resolutions pertaining to Israel-Palestine during nearly every session of the United Nations General Assembly, dating to the Organization's earliest days. The question of Palestine has its own standing committee within the UN (UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, or

CEIRPP), its own dedicated UN online portal (UNISPAL), and its own subsidiary organization dedicated to Palestinian refugees (UN Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA).

Yet despite the sustained focus on Israel-Palestine over the course of many decades, the United Nation's Public Relations office acknowledges that, "the Palestine issue remains unresolved, and continues to require the urgent attention of the international community" (United Nations 2008, iii). Whether the UN is simply unable or unwilling to act in a manner that would curtail Israel's burgeoning settlement enterprise and limit the violence of its military occupation, the end result is the same: Since 2000, the number of Israeli settlers residing in the occupied West Bank has nearly doubled, from around 350,000 in 2000 to just under 700,000 settlers over the course of two decades (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2020; B'Tselem 2019). The unobstructed construction of the separation barrier, bypass roads, and the unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem has shattered any possibility of territorial contiguity for a future Palestine state. Palestinian Citizens of Israel face increasing precarity as successive right-wing governments entrench discriminatory legal principles, most infamously in the 2018 Nation-State Law (Ben-Youssef and Tamari 2018; Jamal and Kensicki 2020). And Palestinian refugees remain no closer today to realizing their internationally recognized right to return to the homeland from which they were displaced.

Given the international community's failure to protect Palestinian human rights and the UN's inability to stop Israel's expanding military occupation, many Palestinians have grown disenchanted with the promises of international law. Writing about the history of the human rights regime in Palestine, as well as the generalized cynicism its fruitless efforts give rise to, Lori Allen points out that, people "get wise to the side effects of human rights schemes" (Allen 2013, 21). With faith in international human rights, state-building, and even the promise of

emancipatory nationalism waning, especially among younger Palestinians, many of the activists I worked with expressed a profound sense of doubt about whether justice for stateless Palestinians could be achieved through established legal or political orders.

Further complicating the matter is the fact that there is no clear consensus about what a future Palestinian state should look like or what the goals of Palestinian statecraft should be within popular Palestinian political thought.[1] One approach, which is embodied by the "big blue chair," aims for a kind of aspirational state through the performance of titular statehood. This model emphasizes symbolic state-building projects by seeking recognition for Palestine within the international arena. A second, more institutionalist, approach focuses on shoring up the bureaucracies and logistics required for "modern" statehood by installing "nonfactional technocrats" in the finance, security, and judicial sectors (Elgindy 2011). A third model, one that mirrors the harsh experience of living under military occupation, views state power as nothing more than "arbitrary rule and restrictions," expressed in the policing and repression of a population (Allen 2013, 22). The quips and barbs traded over Abbas's speech at the United Nations reflect popular apprehension over what statehood would achieve for stateless Palestinians – that is, whether a future Palestinian state could become the apogee of the struggle for liberation or whether it would devolve into just another mechanism for violence and subjugation.

This dissertation examines how Palestinian and Israeli activists, disillusioned with the existing model of politics, adopt alternative means for realizing rights that lie beyond the horizon

[1] In recent years, scholars of Palestine have documented the limitations of state-building while subjected to a settler-colonial regime in the occupied Palestinian territories (Raja Khalidi 2019; Abourahme 2011; Rabie 2021; S. C. Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2020; Tartir 2018; Abu Hatoum 2021; Erakat 2019; Allen 2013).

of the nation-state. Without any clear agreement about the objective of Palestinian state-building or how to move past the impasse of previously negotiated agreements, such as the defunct Oslo Accords, grassroot activists have turned towards alternative models of politics. Rejecting the inherited nationalist and rights-based frameworks for political action, activists in Israel-Palestine have instead embraced interventions that do not depend on the blessing of an international legal and political system that has for decades reneged on protecting Palestinian rights. From various architectural projects to collaborative GIS mapping and urban planning efforts, Palestinian and Israeli activists are working towards a scalable vision of a post-conflict future.

Palestinian activists, planners, and architects approach the collapse of state-based nationalist politics – as demonstrated by the quest to possess a hollowed-out seat of power at the UN – as an invitation to explore different scales of political mobilization. Whether in anti-demolition work or local right of return campaigns, activists increasingly frame their interventions in terms of the "right to the city," thereby circumventing the nation-state as the touchstone of rights-based organizing. In so doing, Palestinian and Israeli activists move the conversation away from a positivist and abstract understanding of human rights, one that has long been the purview of state institutions. Instead, these nascent movements focus on the material bedrock from which rights might flourish, embodied in the everyday politics of buildings, roads, buses, closures, walls, and public spaces. This dissertation seeks to understand how this emerging form of postnational activism in Israel-Palestine, unfolding at the intersection of urbanism, human rights, and community organizing, speaks to collective aspirations for redress and reparation that cannot be realized within the status quo models of either regional politics or international law.

In opposition to the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, which is committed to a state-building project whose success is measured by the magnitude of pomp and circumstance it generates, the activists I worked with sought out mundane, prosaic, and small-scale arenas of deliberation within which they could intervene to substantively expand Palestinian access to spatial and human rights in the immediate future. From municipal zoning meetings to town planning sessions and obscure committees charged with oversight of sanitation and street naming, Palestinian activists and their Israeli counterparts found the tools and the means for reimaging a mode of political engagement that was oriented not towards the halls of the United Nations, but instead to the kinds of civic decision-making sites that are too often dismissed as little more than depoliticized bureaucracy (cf. Ferguson 1994). By contrast, this thesis contends that these kinds of seemingly technocratic activities offer underappreciated tools for expanding spatial and human rights in a locally specific yet scalable fashion.

By investigating the political possibilities entailed in activist collaborations that borrow from urbanism, architecture, and human rights frameworks, I ask what it means to use blueprints, town plans, and open-sourced digital maps as tactics in the struggle for Palestinian rights. In what follows, I outline some of the key conceptual debates that animate this research question.

2. Modern Human Rights: The State & Stateless Persons

The events unfolding in the U.N. in 2011 reflected longstanding frustration over the limits of international human rights in offering remedies for Palestinians lacking national rights.[2]

[2] As Lori Allen (2013), Lisa Hajjar (2001), and others have long argued, human rights law and human rights organizations have had a decidedly mixed record of developing legal and political strategies for resisting Israeli military occupation.

The modern human rights regime, as realized in multilateral institutions such as the UN and its infamous blue chairs, developed in the wake of the Second World War. Beginning in 1947, the UN's Human Rights Commission – the only commission mandated under the UN's founding charter – began drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Responding to the recent horrors of the Holocaust, as well as to the desire to prosecute acts newly defined as "crimes against humanity," the drafters of the UDHR sought to codify human dignity as the ostensible grounds from which a set of universal human rights could be enumerated (A/RES/217(III); United Nations 1998). However, as scholars of human rights are quick to point out, the supposedly universal rights catalogued in the UDHR rely on nation-states for enforcement and implementation. Article 2 of the UN Charter enshrines this principle of national sovereignty, making it a cornerstone of international human rights law (U.N. Charter 1945). Paradoxically, the modern human rights system treats the nation-state as not only the primary repository, but also the ultimate guarantor, of universal human rights (Arendt 1973; Benhabib 2018; Hajjar 2001; J. A. Gordon 2019; Gündoğdu 2012; Goodale 2019).

As Palestinian refugees and displaced persons learned from personal experience, those who are most likely to have their rights threatened – stateless persons – are at the same time those least afforded protection under modern international law. Insofar as human rights enforcement relies on nation-state actors, one's claim to humanity has never proven sufficient to guarantee protection from mass human rights violations. As Hannah Arendt (1973) argued soon after the codification of the UDHR, stateless persons have effectively been cast out of the framework of international law: human rights, which were supposed to apply equally to all persons regardless of national origins, ceased to exist for the stateless because "it turned out that the moment human beings lacked their own government and had to fall back upon their minimal

rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution willing to guarantee them" (Arendt 1973, 292). In practice, the international regime that was supposed to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable persons – refugees, non-citizen detainees, and others who could not claim belonging within the nation-state – created the conditions for intensifying stateless populations' insecurity, making it impossible for those who lacked recourse to national institutions to seek redress elsewhere (Arendt 1973, 298–99).

Lacking a sovereign state, Palestinians have had to fall back on international law to vouchsafe their basic human rights. For example, when the IDF ratcheted up the use of collective punishment to squash widespread civil disobedience during the first intifada, Palestinian human rights NGOs documented these abuses and publicized them to an international audience, including member states of the United Nations (Hajjar 2001; Sfard 2018; Shehadeh 1988). In due course, dozens of human rights groups opened offices in Ramallah and East Jerusalem in order to document Israeli military aggression and provide legal means of curtailing mass human rights violations. Amid the struggles of the first intifada onwards, the idiom of human rights emerged as a kind of "common language" for connecting "Palestinians to the world outside" (Giacaman 2000, 4). Despite these sustained efforts to publicly record rights violations in the oPt, Palestinians watched with growing dismay as the international system proved both indisposed and incapable of stopping Israeli military aggression. As the Palestinian writer and human rights lawyer, Raja Shehedah, recently concluded, "neither international law nor the extensive efforts of human rights organizations have been successful in getting international law enforced,"

despite over 40 years of attempts by Shehadah and other Palestinian human rights lawyers to seek remedies within international law (Shehadeh 2008, 35).[3]

For Palestinians, who have endured over seventy years of statelessness, the profound deficiencies of international human rights and nationalist politics alike has created an urgent need to identify alternative models of political action. Like the various architectural, GIS, and mapping projects described in this dissertation, Palestinian and Israeli activists have explicitly sought out interventions that do not depend on prior agreement from either international or national institutions. As Yousef Jabareen, an architect and refugee from the village of al-Lajjun, surmised after one late-evening discussion with a mixed group of Israeli and Palestinian planners: "Even as Palestinian national politics is becoming utterly fragmented," the new generation is, "creating new typologies, building a new collective memory, through planning, through architecture, through social media." During 24-months of fieldwork, I tracked the varied ways in which activists experimented with these emerging "typologies" of politics – ranging from spatial tactics based on counter-mapping depopulated Palestinian villages to creating digital blueprints for refugees to rebuild destroyed homes – in order to understand how they worked to transform the spatial and collective injuries that stem from prolonged refugeehood.

In contrast with modern human rights law, which has historically privileged national rights and neglected the potential significance of such "subnational" arenas, the activists among whom I conducted fieldwork prioritized work that targeted villages, municipalities, regional

[3] The Israeli human rights lawyer, Michael Sfard, raises similar questions, asking: "As a human rights lawyer representing people living under occupation whose civil rights have been suspended for fifty years, does my work make any difference?" Or worse: "Am I a pawn in the greatest swindle of the Israeli occupation, just passing its half-century mark, by helping to prop up the illusion of a regime that has mechanisms and laws in place to prevent arbitrary acts, contain state violence, and thwart injustice?" (Sfard 2018, 2).

bodies, and at least on one occasion, a single apartment complex. By moving away from the traditional, state-based language of human rights and towards a model predicated on "the right to the city," young activists have chosen to eschew the nation-state question altogether.[4]

With this in mind, this dissertation focuses squarely on the emerging nexus of spatial rights and human rights in Israel-Palestine. In doing so, I ask: What are the effects of this scalar shift in moving from the nation-state to the city as a repository of rights? And if part of what is at stake in this move is an attempt to organize collectively outside of a state-based framework, then, through what means can these non-national rights be institutionalized, safeguarded, and sustained? Finally, can a blueprint of collective rights that was drawn under condition of occupation and territorial dispossession provide the material substrate for building towards a "post-Nakba" landscape in Israel-Palestine?

3. The Right to the City or the Site of Future Rights?

When urban justice movements proclaim a "right to the city" – both in Palestine and globally – they unite around a rallying cry that can be traced back to the early works of Henri Lefebvre (1996a). While the phrase has since taken on a life of its own (Purcell 2002; Merrifield 2011; Elden 2004), tracking its origins provides a useful entry point for the debate on the role of urban rights in Israeli-Palestinian activism. Writing in Paris amid the political revolts of 1968, Lefebvre coined the phrase "right to the city" as a way of connecting France's postwar struggle over the meaning of citizenship within a rapidly urbanizing, increasingly polarized, and socially

[4] A point I will return to in Chapter 6, while many of the activities described in this thesis focus on locally centered activism, the language of the "right to the city" is broad enough to track across a set of structural and social issues that exist both above and below the national scale.

discordant modern metropolis. Between the new sprawling suburbs outside of Paris, which largely housed working-class Parisians, and the gradual remaking of the historic city center that had become inundated by a rising tide of megastores and traffic-packed expressways, Lefebvre feared a future where cities would be ever more fragmented and segregated.

Reflecting these anxieties as well as the uncertainties of Paris in 1968, Lefebvre pitched the right to the city in especially broad terms. In his own words, it was a "cry and demand" for a more just city that encompassed, "a right to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange" (Lefebvre 1996, 178). Such a program of city-wide transformation would rest on the exercise of two, intertwined principles that together cement the right to the city. The first is an implied right of appropriation – that is, the right for diverse populations to build and inhabit the metropolis regardless of their class status or national origin. The second is an expansive view of the right of participation, ensuring that the process of planning and designing the urban environment is open to challenges from all of the city's citizens. This implies not only a right to inhabit, but also to collectively remake urban life, architecture, and social as well as economic relations.[5]

Perhaps the clearest example of what this would entail for affected communities can be found in Lefebvre's analysis of the working-class and migrant enclaves built on the outskirts of Paris (Lefebvre 1996a). Reviewing the history of Paris's postwar urban planning, Lefebvre observed how state and city planners worked in concert to systematically expel immigrants and the economically disadvantaged from Paris's core neighborhoods. Given the rising costs of

[5] Later scholars of cities and citizenship stipulate that such a right is not an "inherent and natural property of individuals," but is instead a right fashioned through "social relatedness" (Holston and Appadurai 1996).

housing and the steady concentration of wealth in the city, he suggests, all but the wealthiest of the city's residents would eventually be pushed to the periphery, a process he dubs the, "tragedy of the *banlieusards*" (Lefebvre 1968). In order to reverse this geographic dispersal, marginalized groups would need to insist on their intrinsic "right to return" (Lefebvre 1996b, 19). Whether by this Lefebvre meant that marginalized residents have the right to return to the neighborhoods from which they were displaced or that future planning ought to enable them to return to urban landscapes reconfigured to meet their needs is not entirely clear. Regardless, both the idea of return to a site of displacement and to a space transformed to meet the needs of the displaced strongly resonates, for obvious reasons, amongst activists in Israel-Palestine.

For Lefebvre, at stake in this call for Paris's marginalized populations to reclaim the center is a vision of a future metropolis that allows for the redistribution of not only space, people, and built forms, but also of access to democratic decision-making and community participation. "The right to the city" is a call for the reordering of the social, political and economic underpinnings of major cities. This in turn requires a restructuring of power relations as a basic consideration in the creation of the urban space, by transferring power from capital and the state to urban inhabitants. This vision of city rights is not limited to the mere exercise of use rights over urban resources. Rather, the right to participation, or the right of inhabitants to a central role in decision-making with regard to the urban space in which they are living, takes precedence. Evident in this formulation is that the right to the city cuts across social, economic, and political institutions within cities, and requires that we approach it as a collective rather than an individual right.

While the various meanings ascribed to the phrase have adapted and evolved over time, this initial understanding of urban rights continues to shape and inspire social movements across

the global south. After several decades of languishing in relative obscurity, Lefebvre's work on this topic received renewed interest in the early 1990s. Along with the transition to neoliberal economic reforms and the accompanying mass urbanization, labor organizers and activists resurfaced the idiom of the right to the city while mobilizing against gentrification, urban wealth inequality, and the growing erosion of public services. By the early 2000s, the right to the city had gained international recognition as a valuable tool of modern human rights practice. Over the past two decades, social justice movements in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East, campaigned on the right to the city as a means for advancing affordable housing, migrant rights, urban transportation, and access to urban governance structures (D. Harvey 2010; Purcell 2014; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2012; D. Mitchell 2012; Attoh 2019; Iveson 2013). In 2016, the U.N. established it as a cornerstone of the "New Urban Agenda," ratified in 2016 at Habitat III Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador (Colau 2016).

While popular and scholarly work on Israel-Palestine often emphasize its "purported uniqueness" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019, 22), such a viewpoint obscures the ways in which activists in Israel-Palestine learn from and participate in a transnational conversation on urban rights.[6] A broad umbrella term, the "right to the city" has provided a framework for unifying and organizing diverse global campaigns that span from Ramallah to Belfast and Seattle. As David Harvey argued in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the right to city is at once a political as well as mobilizing frame, acting simultaneously as "both working slogan and political ideal" (Harvey 2008, 40). This pragmatic flexibility can be seen in the wide array of groups and organizations that subscribe to some aspect of the right of the city agenda, ranging from

[6] Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins' (2019) research on waste in the occupied West Bank provides a detailed and thorough critique of this tendency to view Palestine as separate, out-of-time, and out-of-place within the flow of global processes.

coalitions of housing and anti-eviction activists mobilizing in a dozen US cities under the banner of the Right to the City Alliance (Liss 2012) to anti-austerity urban social movements in central Europe (Mayer 2016) and squatter rights as well as anti-demolition campaigns in cities across the global south ranging from Mumbai and Luanda to Istanbul and Santiago (Zhang 2020; Gastrow 2014; Kuymulu 2013; Weinstein and Ren 2009). While each of these urban locales was wrought by specific historical and material forces, their disparate struggles share an echo of Lefebvre's formulation as a "cry and demand" for contesting and remaking the boundaries of citizenship in the city.

Activists in Israel-Palestine borrow, share, adapt, and repurpose elements of the global right to the city movements in ways that illuminate the political stakes in reclaiming the right to plan, build, and create urban space. By moving towards the right of the city and away from state-building as the locus of political engagement, activists in Israel-Palestine work to anchor a form of concrete belonging in the cement, paper, gravel, metal, and stone from which cities are fashioned. In so doing, these activists lay bare the disconnect between the, "formal rights extended to official or first class members of a nation-state and the dearth of resources for those who hover precariously around its edges" (Fennell 2015, 21). Writing about similar developments in Brazil, James Holston and Teresa Caldeira (2005; 2007) describe how sustained pressure from "insurgent citizenship movements" has instilled a vision of urban citizenship into "innovative municipal codes, charters, and master plans," effectively disrupting the, "established formulas of rule, conceptions of right, and hierarchies of social place and privilege" (Holston 2007, 274). Here as in Palestine, urban social movements develop an understanding of rights that exceeds the definition of formal, legal rights emanating from the state and its governing institutions.

While the right to the city thus provides a powerful model for many activists and NGOs, it still begs the question of how urban rights sit alongside normative human rights. By analyzing how the idea of a right to the city has been taken up by activist collectives in Israel-Palestine, we can begin to see how the shift to organizing around urban rights might, in Purcell's words, "provide the basis for a new form of citizenship that challenges the neoliberal world view" (Purcell 2003, 576). Specifically, in the context of Palestine-Israel, I argue that the right to the city framework opens up a valuable organizing modality for seeking Palestinian collective-rights outside of that state-based and international institutions that have historically failed to assure Palestinian rights.

4. From architecture to activism: techno-politics and rights in Palestine-Israel

That Palestinian and Israeli activists should deploy the tools of mapping, design, and planning in service of political projects cuts against conventional modes of thinking about technocratic forms of knowledge production. Classically, social theorists approached technocratic knowledge production as separated from the realm of politics. For instance, building on the Latin distinction between *homo faber* and *homo politicus*, Hannah Arendt (2013) distinguishes between the practical means-end work of planning objects in the world and the higher realm of action, in which citizens collaborate around collective projects of self-realization. Drawing on a similar distinction between technical means-end labor and collective debate over the good life, Max Weber (1946; 1978) argued that modernity is characterized by an increasing rationalization, in which distinct spheres of activity from scientific research to bureaucracy were increasingly governed by seemingly value-free determinations of efficiency and skill. Building on these insights, Habermas (2015) warned of the potential for a "colonization of the lifeworld,"

whereby the areas of life in which lay people might engage in rational debate was increasingly receding before ever more specialized and technocratic spheres of knowledge.

The claim here is not that technocratic knowledge is inherently depoliticizing. To wit, historians and anthropologists have traced the ways that the modernist disciplines of planning and mapping facilitated the consolidation of state power over populations and territories. As Scott (1998) and Mitchell (2002) demonstrate, technical expertise is a key ingredient in modern statecraft precisely because it enables the state to standardize, regulate, and exert control over uneven geographies. In a similar vein, Michel Foucault shows how technocratic knowledge supports the diffusion of subtle yet pernicious capillaries of power: "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault 2009, 108).

Moreover, non-governmental programs aimed at broader social issues – such as poverty reduction or child hunger – can often reproduce this same dynamic in their own unique way, further expanding the reach of state-power (Fisher 1997; Escobar 2011; Li 2007; T. Mitchell 2005; Feldman 2012). As James Ferguson argued in the context of civil society work in Lesotho:

> By making the intentional blueprints for ‘‘development’’ so highly visible, a ‘‘development’’ project can end up performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly, under cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object (Ferguson 1994, 256).

For Ferguson, as well as for other critics of modernist development projects, the language of technocratic expertise is insidious not simply because it has the institutional capacity to extend bureaucratic state power, but more so, because of its tendency to depoliticize the object of intervention. By translating hunger or poverty into the apolitical calculus of a technical problem, these programs reconfigure political issues as neutral obstacles that can be overcome through the aid of professionalized experts.

A similar history of technocratic expertise – including extensive, yearly, state-directed town planning – has been critical to securing Israel state control over its planned spaces. From the construction of a bypass roads linking the "frontier settlements" (Efrat 2004) to the statewide dispersal of modular town plans (LeVine 2004; Yacobi 2004), Israeli planners have enlisted the tools of modernist "architecture to continue the war" over the Palestinian built environment "by other means" (Weizman 2007). Rashid Khalidi (2007), in a direct reference to one of Weber's most famous phrases, coins the stifling effects of Israel's technocratic mastery of occupation an "iron cage" that all Palestinians must endure.

Activists in Israel-Palestine are fully aware that Israeli institutions make use of technocratic expertise in national planning, mapping, and building codes in order to firm up Israeli state power. As Yousef, a Haifa-based Palestinian architect I collaborated with during fieldwork, put it during one of our discussions on Israeli architectural politics: "after the Nakba," the adoption of the TAMA [Israel's masterplan], represented nothing short of a "planning coup de grace," enabling the state of Israel to score a huge "spatial victory" over historic Palestine. And since the current version of the plan [TAMA no.35] doubles down on the need to destroy all standing Palestinian remnants, including signage and several cemeteries, Yousef surmised that: "it has now fallen to planners and state bureaucrats to complete what the Nakba began."

That activists in Israel-Palestine are appealing to the logics of planning and architecture might seem like a paradoxical strategy given the historic nature of technocratic bureaucracy in shoring up Israeli territorial control. However, it is *precisely* because activists and residents alike are routinely exposed to the violence associated with the state's usage of technocratic plans that they are compelled to find ways of appropriating similar tools and tactics for the benefit of their own struggles and movements.

In many respects, activists' nascent efforts to repurpose state technocratic tools echoes earlier moments of colonial lawfare and later experiences of human rights vernacularization.[7] In Palestine as elsewhere, lawfare as an expert practice capable of both subjugation and resistance offers a useful reference point for understanding how contemporary activists engage with technocratic processes that are generative of dispossession as well as reparation. Much like the world-making power of technocratic planning, colonial legality reordered colonial spaces and relations, imposing "a sense of order upon its subordinates by means of violence rendered legible, legal, and legitimate by its own sovereign word" (J. Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 30). But wherever lawfare subjugated colonized populations, it also created the conditions under which subordinated groups could seize the medium of legality to contest state violence, predation, and oppression in the courts. By mobilizing the language of legal expertise, colonized peoples transformed an instrument of domination into a potential vehicle for "speaking back in the language of the law" (J. L. Comaroff 1994, xii). While both governmental and non-

[7] Writing about one of the first human rights organizations founded in the occupied West Bank in the 1980s, *Al-Haq,* Lori Allen (2013) documents how Palestinian human rights workers adopted a strictly apolitical, evidence-based methodology for documenting Israeli violations. Against the background of growing factionalism in Palestinian nationalist politics, "seeking accountability for Israeli violations through human rights work was a new form of protest and politics for Palestinians" (Allen 2013, 42).

governmental groups in Palestine similarly use legal means to press their claims, the groups I study in this thesis also appropriate other forms of highly technical knowledge production to press their claims against the Israeli state.

While they borrow from the knowledge-practice of technocrats, Israeli and Palestinian activists experiment with the tools of the trade in an investigational, open-sourced format that deviates sharply from its use in state institutions. These open-source urbanism experiments resemble a "politics in beta," a form of activist improvisation that does not merely seek to reconfigure the technical object – "as in the as in the release of beta, nonstable, or work-in-progress versions in software or architectural development" – but instead models a "prefiguration of objects and sociality" (Corsín-Jiménez 2014, 383).[8]

The techniques of open-source urbanism described in this dissertation take part in a broader practice of "collaborative science" (Barry 2013, Haklay 2012), which reflects a global trend towards DIY-ing technocratic tools as well as forging novel collaborations between citizens and scientists. In this sense, the experience of activists in Israel-Palestine shares much in common with other instances of "DIY urbanism" recently described by scholars of cities in the global south (G. C. Douglas 2018; Gastrow 2020; Finn 2014; Talen 2015; Jabareen 2014). In Luanda, for example, Claudia Gastrow situates the burst of DIY building knowledge within a post-conflict construction boom that has made the, "preservation of everyday life and material cohesion" dependent on "individualized and localized attempts to patch together crumbling materiality's in lieu of state or significant larger interventions" (Gastrow 2020, 94).

[8] Scholars have documented related ways in which Palestinians in exile and in the oPt improvise and piece together patchworks of resiliency in other arenas of daily life, from the management of waste (S. Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019) to education (Feldman 2016) alongside the "continual improvisation" of daily life in refugee camps and occupied spaces (Allen 2008; Peteet 2017).

In Palestine-Israel, the DIY ethos to planning, mapping, designing, and building also helps activists make their demands visible to the public in a language that is easily recognizable by state and international institutions. For the Palestinian architect Sandi Hillal, this is an especially critical aspect of nascent urbanist movements in Palestine, since until now, "the Israelis have been the ones planning and the Palestinians have been the ones who are reacting." DIY planning enables Palestinians to push past this implicit "threshold of participation," which historically, has prevented "those who are affected from meaningfully contributing to the production and interpretation" of lived space (Keysar and Farber 2020, 5048).

In contrast to the technocratic applications associated with state bureaucracies, in these instances, participation "can be an active force not only for rendering issues public, but also for re-negotiation of relations *between* politics and knowledge (Marres 2018, 454). By trialing a form of beta politics, activists in Israel-Palestine are attempting to "hack" a pathway to rights and citizenship that bypasses the old national routes established by state and international institutions.

5. Origins of the Project

The core of this dissertation developed during extensive fieldwork between 2013-2014 with internally displaced persons from al-Ruways, Mi'ar, Yajjur, and other depopulated villages located within Israel. In the aftermath of the 1948 *Nakba* (see Chapter 2), the newly created Israeli state forcibly relocated Palestinian refugees from these villages, moving displaced Palestinians into nearby municipalities, such as Tamra. By the early 1950s, the IDF civil administration carved out Tamra and its adjacent neighborhoods as a "secure zone," within which several uprooted communities could be grouped together and governed under military rule

that would remain in effect until 1966 (S. Robinson 2013). Throughout this period, spanning nearly two-decades of martial law, the IDF maintained strict limits on displaced Palestinians' freedom of movement, expression, and labor. While the end of military governance in 1967 brought an end to some of the most restrictive policies (such as enforced curfews), displaced Palestinians within Israel continued to be denied the right to return. As I discuss in Chapter 2, since then, all successive Israeli administrations have consistently rejected Palestinian refugees' petitions to rebuild in pre-48 villages.

Given this historical backdrop, I was surprised when, in 2012, I received an unexpected phone call from the head of the al-Ruways Refugee Council, Fadi, about a new initiative to create a masterplan for a future, rebuilt al-Ruways. While I was excited to participate in the project, I also at first wondered about the utility of creating these alternative architectural models when the current conditions on the ground made it seem unlikely that the plan could be realize in the foreseeable future. Finally, I put this question to Rawan, a Palestinian architect who collaborated on this as well as several other projects discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation. While Rawan readily conceded that this specific blueprint for al-Ruways might not immediately become a reality, the act of planning, she suggested, would ensure that some future iteration of it would be materialized. Reflecting on her own experience with planning and return, Rawan argued: "You have to understand, my father was part of the generation that tried to go through the Israeli courts. Yet even when the judges finally mandated that our land should be returned, the IDF simply sealed off access to the village… so I decided, I'm not going to ask to return. I'm returning. Miri Regev [Israeli politician] can say that we're a cancer that needs to be removed, but she can't stop us from existing here, imagining our future, planning our future."

This understanding of planning – as something that entails not only a technocratic, but also an embodied and collective form of labor – informed the everyday political praxis of resisting occupation and displacement as elaborated through the rest of this dissertation. Significantly, I argue, the mode of planning that Rawan envisioned for herself and for other refugees yearning to return stood in sharp contrast to the kind of nationalist politics aspired to by the iconic, empty blue chair of the UN. Whereas the chair represented all the trappings of statehood and its petitions to officialdom, the "alternative masterplan" forfeits symbolic recognition of the right of return in favor of making the return a concrete reality. And in this way, such alternative blueprints not only challenge the state's claim to sovereignty as realized through control of territory, but also works to establish new typologies and methods for staging political intervention beyond the limiting scale of the nation-state.

6. METHODS

Dissertation research consisted of 24-months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Israel and Palestine. During the first year, I divided my fieldwork between three, closely-knit Palestinian villages in northern Israel while collaborating with two local NGOs, *Zochrot* and *Baladna*. While they target different populations, *Zochrot* and *Baladna* both utilized overlapping visual, material, and pedagogical strategies to contest state practices in Israel and Palestine.

Through my affiliation with these two organizations, I was able to participate in: (a) "counter-mapping" projects, where Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Citizens of Israel engaged in participatory mapping in order to collectively investigate the spatial, environmental, and material conditions of possibility for facilitating refugee return to destroyed villages; (b) a related project on "modeling the return," where I worked with Palestinian refugees from Mi'ar, using architectural strategies of modeling, blueprinting, and design to visually project an image of a

"future Mi'ar," while concurrently planning for the return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Israel; (c) commemoration events for destroyed Palestinian villages within the 1948 borders of Israel, as well as walking tours of the village sites led by refugees; (d) a public architectural competition, focused on creating a blueprint for transforming a decommissioned Israeli army base in the village of Beit Dagan into an intake facility for future Palestinian returnees; (e) youth-led GIS project, where students from an East Jerusalem high school used individual GIS devices to upload geographic data points every time they witnessed an instance of house demolitions, settler attacks, flying checkpoints, illegal detentions, or army raids in their neighborhoods, thus producing an alternative map of state violence in their community; as well as, (f) formal classroom observation on the teaching of the Nakba in Hebrew to Jewish Israeli secondary school teachers, where I focused especially on the sensorial retraining required for Jewish Israeli participants to be able to decipher the material, visual, and forensic signs of the Nakba, as manifest in the contemporary built environment of Israel.

Through ethnographic research at these multiple-but-overlapping sites, I was able to investigate how activists used architectural, spatial, and visual technologies to make visible objects that are normally unmarked in people's routine encounters with the state and the built environment – ranging from Palestinian students using visual charts to diagram the absence of green spaces in their neighborhoods to Jewish Israelis producing a counter-map of former Palestinian villages that have been all but erased from Israel's official cartographic representation and group visits to similar sites wherein participants tour the traces of a Palestinian material history that is occluded in the Israeli landscape. In so doing, it became clear that such sensorial and spatial activities are critical not only for fashioning political

subjectivities, but also for securing Palestinian rights in the absence of other national interventions.

From a methodological standpoint, this meant I had to think creatively about research design, in order to account for how subjects oriented themselves in relationship to ruins, absences, and traces. Along with extensive classroom observation of pedagogic training, participation in workshops and tours, archival research, and focus groups with participants, I also used digital mapping as a method for generating data about subjects' geographic imaginary and perception of the built environment. While working with Palestinian refugees and IDPs in Israel, I used the same mapping techniques alongside participatory planning methods to gather data about the kinds of spatial future they envision for returnee populations. In both cases, I followed up these mapping and planning sessions with semi-structured interviews.

In the course of this research, special effort was made to provide research support for Palestinian IDP communities working to advance the right of return. To that end, I collaborated with Zochrot and Badil in planning a conference on "Planning Today, Refugee Return Tomorrow." I also helped them adapt their existing curriculum and materials to teach a specialized class designed for urban planners and architects, which emphasized the material, environmental, and spatial dimensions of the Nakba. In addition, I retrieved pre-1948 aerial maps of Palestinian villages from the Israeli Department of Maps and provided them to my informants. Drawing on these experiences, I led a workshop for Palestinian researchers about how to access pre-1948 maps from within the state archive. Finally, I translated dozens of pre-1948 land registry documents and helped digitalize them for public dissemination.

7. Chapter Summaries: Organization of the Dissertation

INTRO AND CHAPTER 2.

The dissertation opens by situating the contemporary urban rights movement in Israel-Palestine within the layered spatial histories of settler-colonialism, changing regimes of land tenure, and modern state planning. Chapter 2 contends that much of the literature on Israel-Palestine since 1967 has focused on Israeli policies in the territories occupied during the June war, while overlooking the pre-existing spatial and territorial practices that shaped the post-1967 reality.[9] But despite this framing, which views 1967 as a break from earlier patterns of Israeli state formation, the architecture of occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem explicitly builds on Israeli planning, zoning, and construction strategies used before and during the 1948 *Nakba*. In other words, 1967 and its aftermath represents a spatial and political continuation of the *Nakba* through other means. By tracing the territorial transformations wrought by older colonial spatial practices – spanning from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandate and the eventual establishment of the state of Israel – Chapter 2 offers a historical framework for analyzing the emergence of urbanist activism as a profound challenge to the Israeli state's monopoly over spatial and territorial rights.

CHAPTER 3. Seeing is Believing: The Sites and Sights of the *Nakba.*

The third chapter examines how the history of expunging the tangible markers of pre-1948 Palestinian built forms, as documented in the preceding chapter, creates an acute problem for refugees and their supporters in the present: namely, how to locate, visualize, and

[9] Historians of the occupation stress the politics of separation, embodied in the Separation Wall, the dual use road system, the imposition of checkpoints, and the fragmentation of Palestinian territories into disconnected islands of noncontiguous jurisdiction under the 1993 Oslo Agreement. Other scholars focus on the dual legal system that allows the Israeli judiciary to separate the application of laws within and without the Green Line.

commemorate Palestinian sites that are now physically absent. Here, I trace the strategies utilized by activists and refugees to mark the latent forms of Palestinian presence and, concomitantly, make visible ongoing human rights violations. Drawing from participant-observation at informal pedagogical sites, I demonstrate how activists and refugees teach students to "read the landscape" anew, by using sensorial strategies that translate spatial absences into perceptible ciphers of past and present dispossession. In so doing, they also hone a visual aptitude for detecting human rights abuses manifest in the destruction and construction of new urban centers in Palestine-Israel.

CHAPTER 4. Censored Geographies: Erasing Palestine from the Map.

The fourth chapter examines the reproduction of geographic knowledge through an analysis of the state censorship practices observed during fieldwork. In contrast to conventional understandings of censorship as a top-down process, this chapter looks at how the bureaucratic and legal restrictions faced by architects, activists, and geographers entailed a far more diffuse and decentralized organization of cartographic knowledge than typically given in accounts of hierarchical and state-based accounts of censorship. The process of learning to inhabit the bureaucrat's point-of-view shaped not only the content of official and unofficial mappings, it also circumscribed the way individuals learned to approach lived spaces. This chapter suggests that censorship works not only as a mechanism for banning information, but also as a means for fostering and foreclosing certain ways of apprehending the world. In the case of Israeli state archives, for example, what is kept off the grid – whether it be an army base or a depopulated village or even just the representation of borders – tells us much more about the way state

violence is imbricated on the landscape than it does about the specific layouts or topographies of Israel-Palestine.

CHAPTER 5. Palestine 2.0: Mapping the (Digital) Occupation.

Chapter 5 looks at several GIS mapping initiatives in Occupied East Jerusalem that have experimented with open-sourced digital maps as a method for documenting and visualizing state violence cartographically. While maps have long been a central point of contention in the ongoing Palestine-Israel conflict, I argue that these popular digital cartographic initiatives are significant less for the way that they map territories or boundaries than for their ability to reveal the latent patterns of spatial and infrastructural violence that mark the lived experience of the occupation. In this context, GIS initiatives are as noteworthy for their effects on the subjects who produce maps as those who consume them. Through mapping encounters with state officers, trash on the street, and even the lack of green space, subjects acquire new sensory and bodily aptitudes, allowing them to visualize the presence of the occupation in the very material construction of both real and virtual networks. Ultimately, these new technologies allow activists to share, digitalize, and document the various scales of territorial and cartographic injury enacted in the everyday management of space under military occupation.

CHAPTER 6. Planning the Future: Modeling Refugee Return in Palestine/Israel.

Chapter 6 delves into the ways in which refugees, activists, architects, and planners appropriate the state's own language of planning in order to protest the material exigencies of displacement and occupation. Drawing on interviews and fieldwork with internal refugee groups from Jaffa and al-Ruways, this chapter looks at how displaced communities use the tools of

urban planning and design to reclaim spatial rights to the villages depopulated in 1948. I argue that, while the act of drawing up such plans is itself an important means of asserting spatial rights, planning sessions did more than just provide occasion for denouncing unjust state policies. In practice, they became occasions for gathering scattered historical records, as well as for disseminating these documents to a broader public. As such, I suggest that alternative master planning is not merely a technocratic exercise aimed at spatial development, but also an important pedagogic tool for instilling a shared vision of future refugee return among displaced communities.

CHAPTER 7. Conclusion: Blueprints of the Nation.

Reflecting the "alternative planning" techniques deployed by Palestinian refugees, the concluding chapter considers some of the implications for theorizing urban violence. In the case of Palestine-Israel, I argue that planning is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can provide the material scaffolding for recursively mapping ethnic difference onto space. On the other hand, the language of planning can also be deployed against the state, such as when it is used by refugees, activists, and architects attempting to articulate rights to the city. In turn, planning can open up new modes of contesting urbicide, by seeking not merely to alter the identity of the space, but also to contest the very system that requires space to be assigned to only one identity group. In this case, the lexicon of the expert becomes the privileged idiom through which a new political reality can be envisioned. This chapter thus highlights the significance of planning as both a condition of conflict and a medium for realizing rights.

Chapter 2: The 1948 *Nakba* as Past, Present, and Future

Much of the historiography of modern Israel-Palestine takes as its point of departure 1967. In June of that year, Israeli forces captured the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, marking the beginning of the military occupation of the oPt. In focusing on the post-1967 development of occupation politics, historians stress the politics of separation, embodied in the Separation Wall, the dual use road system, the imposition of checkpoints, and the fragmentation of the oPt into disconnected islands of noncontiguous territory under the 1995 Oslo II Agreement (Weizman 2007; Kretzmer 2002; Azoulay and Ophir 2012; Givoni 2019; Hochberg 2015).

By treating 1967 as a break from earlier patterns of Israeli state formation, rather than as a continuation of pre-existing spatial and territorial practices, popular historiographies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict define it in terms of the boundaries set (or violated) in 1967. As the social historian Shira Robinson notes, "outside of pathbreaking socio-legal histories," popular narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, "cease abruptly before the start of the 1948 war," only resuming the storyline in 1967 (Robinson 2013, 5).

However, accounts of the conflict that begin in 1967 – two decades after the *Nakba*, the creation of over 750,000 Palestinian refugees, and the depopulation of nearly 500 Palestinian villages in 1948 – necessarily obscure older spatial histories that formed the blueprints for building the post-1967 reality. In addition, defining the conflict exclusively in terms of Israel's military occupation draws too sharp a distinction between the settler-colonial policies deployed in the occupied territories and the pre-1967 formation of the state of Israel within the Green Line. As a result, such analyses take for granted the idea that Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians represent discrete, monolithic groups whose ethno-national identity can be mapped onto the bifurcated geographies of "Israel" and "Palestine."

Neither the politics of separation nor the post-1967 settler regime emerged in a vacuum. Rather, the architecture of occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem modeled itself off Zionist planning, zoning, and construction strategies that had been integral to Jewish state building throughout the late-Ottoman and Mandate eras in Palestine. In this chapter, I trace the territorial transformations wrought by layered colonial histories – spanning from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandate and the eventual establishment of the state of Israel – that continue to undergird contemporary politics in Israel-Palestine. In so doing, I look closely at the histories of infrastructure, built environments, and architecture that produce Israeli and Palestinian national spaces, binding together territories and populations. In this way, I hope to situate the modern urban rights movement in Israel-Palestine within the complex genealogy of spatial and colonial practices that have contingently remade the region's material landscape.

1. Deep Roots: Social Geographies of Late-Ottoman Palestine

Any account of territorial transformation in Israel-Palestine must begin with the enduring impact of the Ottoman rule in the region, and especially the framework of land tenure propagated during the last decades of the empire. The legal and bureaucratic framework for governing territory that emerged during the late-Ottoman period would not only set the terms of colonization during the 19th and 20th centuries but also form the basis of land tenure in modern-day Israel as well as in the oPt (Kedar, Amara, and Yiftachel 2018).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman reformers introduced a series of modernizing laws that fundamentally transformed Palestine's material landscape, social geography, and political status. In 1858, the empire overhauled the existing categories of land ownership, setting in motion a period of gradual land alienation that would prove critical to the first wave of Zionist settler-colonizers looking to gain a foothold in Palestine.

Late-Ottoman Palestine was a largely agrarian society rooted in shared practices of cultivation. For nearly four centuries, a system of communal landholding (*musha'a*) had governed land use in Palestine. Under *musha'a* tenancy, Palestinian cultivators retained collective ownership of village lands, which were re-divided every two or three years, ensuring that all members of the community had equal access to the best lands (Sufian 2008; Shafir 1996; LeVine 2005). The Palestinian lawyer and author, Raja Shehadah, captures the ethos of *musha'a* tenure in his family memoir, writing:

> Here the farmers did not care about the formal ownership of the land. They inherited lands and exchanged them among each other as part of a cycle of crop rotation. They looked upon the feudal lord as their protector and did not mind if he registered the land in his name. Registration rendered land a commodity that could be bought and sold for the first time in the history of Palestine (Shehadeh 2011, 73).

In this brief passage recalling the social geography of late-Ottoman Palestine, Shehadeh offers hints of the upheaval that would accompany the introduction of the 1858 Land Code. Originally conceived as the centerpiece of a broad plan to modernize the empire's operations of state, the land reforms destroyed the old system of *musha'a* tenure, turning tracts of land that used to be held in common into privately-owned parcels that could be sold to the highest bidder.

For early Zionists looking to establish a settler-colony in Palestine, the late-Ottoman privatization reforms opened the door to legally acquiring land deeds in the region, often purchased from absentee landowners. In later sections of Raja Shehadeh's memoir of this time period, he recalls how one such landowner, Niqola Sursuq, became a household name after he sold nearly a quarter-million dunums near Nazareth to the Jewish National Fund, the land agency charged with holding land in trust for Zionist settler-colonialism:

> In the early years of the twentieth century Sursuq hired thousands of workers to establish a modern cotton industry, only to suffer heavy losses. When the opportunity came to sell this land for a good price, some of these feudal lords sold large tracts to the early Zionists. There were others…but the name of Sursuq remains associated in the mind of many Palestinians with what they deem to be the greatest of villainy: selling land to the enemy (Shehadeh 2011, 74).

While the Sursuq family was only one of many landowners who sold deeds to Zionist agencies such as the Jewish National Fund (JNF), their surname's status as popular lore underscores how Palestinian cultivators became vulnerable to mass dispossession as their historic use rights passed to private individuals. Moreover, as a settler-colonial project lacking a major state sponsor, it is plausible that Zionism would not have found an entry point into Palestine without the 1858 reforms; by the final years of Ottoman rule, Zionist land trusts had obtained rights to as much as 10% of historic Palestine.[1]

The 1858 reforms not only launched a process of land alienation in Palestine, they also provided a legal framework for redefining Palestine as *terra nullius,* thereby shaping its colonial geography as a "land without a people for a people without a land." Seeking to modernize taxation and property rights, Ottoman reformers introduced six novel categories of land ownership: *miri* (land of the emir)*, waqf* (land held in a religious trust)*, mulk* (land held in fee simple)*, mahlul* (land that reverted to state control if left uncultivated), *matruka* (land for public use), and *mawat* (dead land).[2] The latter – *mawat* – would prove especially consequential in

[1] The estimates for the amount of land purchased under Ottoman-rule vary from 6% to 12%, but either way, what is clear is that the trust agencies managed to buy millions of dunums in Palestine before the collapse of the empire (Khalidi 2020).
[2] The core features of this legal framework would later be adopted by, first, the British Mandatory government in Palestine, and later incorporated as the basis for current-day state of Israel land tenure (Kedar, Amara, and Yiftachel 2018).

defining parts of Palestine as "waste" or "dead" lands. For one, once administrators decided that a territory was "dead," the original owners lost their existing use and ownership rights as *mawat* areas reverted to state lands. Second, the legal framing of *mawat* lands rendered them *terra nullius*, paving the way for a Zionist mythologies of Palestine as empty or "virgin" land awaiting to be developed through colonization (Kedar, Amara, and Yiftachel 2018).

By allowing state officials to confiscate tracts considered to be underutilized, the reforms precipitated the first mass transfer of Palestinian lands. In a bid to increase state revenues, the 1858 code set conditions under which the state could repossess and develop land that was considered to be either "unused" or "empty" (LeVine 1998; 2004; Stein 1987). In turn, Zionist planners recognized that these newly seized areas could be easily converted into urban land, "which was more easily purchased and developed by Jews" (LeVine 1998, 37). This process led to a complete reorganization of the Palestinian landscape as millions of dunums were either transferred to private owners or reclassified as state lands, all within a short time period.

This new method of authorizing land rights was met with serious misgivings by Palestinian *fellahin*, who correctly surmised that the reform was a pretext for levying taxes. The formalization of the state's relationship to proprietors also provoked fears that official land registration would make the *fellahin* vulnerable to conscription in the Ottoman army (Bunton 2007; Rashid Khalidi 2020). Mindful of these potential consequences for establishing close ties with the state, many Palestinians attempted to avoid registration all together. Instead, Palestinian villagers often preferred to either transfer rights to village headmen or simply underreport areas under cultivation.

Local elites, sensing an opportunity to increase their acquisition of land, also offered to register parcels in their own names. Hoping to avoid direct contact with Ottoman officialdom,

many *fellahin* unwittingly consented to give up their deeds, concentrating them into the hands of a select few landholders (Khalidi 2020; 2009; Stein 1987). As a result, the once owner-occupiers of the land were reduced to the status of agricultural laborers. In the coming decades, it would become clear that the Ottoman reforms left an impoverished population of *fellahin* ever more vulnerable to dispossession from their ancestral lands.

The land code instituted in the last years of the empire was critical to establishing the juridical and territorial logic under which British and Zionist colonization projects could gain a foothold in Palestine. At the same time, these reforms also affected the entire organization of economic, political, and social relations prevalent in 19th century Palestine, demolishing the extant mode of collective landholding while pushing indigenous Palestinians into greater political precarity.

This system of tenure delimited how Palestinian, Ottoman, Zionist, and later, British planners would approach the construction of Palestine's built environment. For the first time, Palestinian territory could be divided, parceled, registered, and exchanged in a market system open to buyers who had no direct connection to the communities who harvested and resided on the land. Rather than serving as a natural extension of a local community's lifeworld, land became associated with private owners, allowing it to be bought, sold, and, crucially, transferred. In the ensuing decades, the 1858 Ottoman reforms would play a critical role in facilitating the efforts of Zionist organizations – such as the Jewish Colonization Association and the Palestine Land Development Trust – to explore and expropriate Palestinian lands.

2. Settling Politics: Early Zionism in Palestine

Zionism emerged in late-nineteenth century Europe as a nationalist-colonial movement that sought to create a "Jewish homeland in Palestine" (Shimoni 1995; Laqueur 2009; Avineri

2017; Shapira 1999). Posited as a response to anti-Semitism and emerging amid a rising tide of nationalist and colonial movements in Europe, Zionism drew on a modernist set of ethno-national political ideas in its quest for a solution to the "Jewish problem." Beginning with the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, the movement soon took on the task of land acquisition and colonization in Palestine (Beinin and Hajjar 2001; Braverman 2009). For the Zionist leaders who gathered in Basel, the success or failure of their endeavors in Palestine would rest not only on whether they could instate a new political identity for Jewish emigres, but more so, on whether they could remake their social, material, and ideological dispositions (Almog 2000; Abu El-Haj 2001; Zerubavel 2018; Sufian 2008).

Labor Zionists, the most popular and powerful of the movement's factions, held that the "redemption" of the Jewish people lay in a corporeal and territorial regime of self-fashioning in Palestine. The act of "settling" – imagined as the occupation and remaking of place – was the primary way in which Zionist settlers could redeem themselves as well as the land. As Nadia Abu El-Haj observes, for Zionist settlers, the *kibush* (conquest) of Palestine was intended to produce: "an intrinsically Jewish space, continuously substantiating the land's own identity and purposes as having been and *needing to be* the Jewish national home" (Abu El-Haj 2001, 18, emphasis in the original). In a similar vein, Yael Zerubavel argues that Zionism saw the founding of new settlements as the key for realizing (*hagshama*) its ambitions: "The most obvious expression of the prominence of this activity was the emergence of the concept of *Yishuv*, Settlement, as the collective reference to the new Hebrew society in Palestine" (Zerubavel 1995, 29).[3] In due course, the term would also be applied to the entire Zionist political leadership in

[3] In modern Hebrew, the term yishuv encompasses both the process of "settling" the land [yishuv ha'aretz] as well as "the settlement" as its end goal.

Palestine – described simply as "the Yishuv." By engaging in industrious, physical activity in Palestine, the Yishuv would give birth to a modern nation as well as a new kind of Jewish subject, the *Sabra* (lit: rough cactus with sweet core).[4]

While settling was designed to help form this new *Sabra* Jew, Zionist leaders also envisioned the act of settlement as the simultaneous redemption of the land. For the Yishuv, Palestine was understood, at once, as a wasteland in need of nurture – "making the desert bloom" – as well as an empty *table rasa* awaiting to be built from scratch. As Theodor Herzl, the founder of labor Zionism, put it in his utopian novel *Altneuland* [Old New Land]: "If this is our homeland, then it has been brought just as low as we are" (Herzl 1902, 5). In this way, political Zionists produced a colonial topography of Palestine that was, much like the physiology of Diaspora Jews, viewed as pathological and in dire need of "reclamation." In turn, the salvation of both the Jewish body and the land would lie in their mutual material transformation.

3. Building, Planning, and Constructing Zionist spaces

Crucially, Zionists conceived of settling as an active process that required not only Jewish immigration, but more so, the molding, construction, and planning of a Jewish state in Palestine; in other words, the nation needed to be built from the ground up. The Hebrew concept of *binyan* – to build (v.), a building (n.) – provided the main framework through which Zionists translated their aspiration into a concrete reality. The notion of *binyan*, building, operated as, "both a national ideal and a tangible activity and object" (Egoz 2014, 173). For Zionist leaders like David Ben-Gurion, the entire project of Zionism emerged out of the praxis of *binyan.* As he

[4] This deliverance was understood to be pre-determined by world historical forces, which posited Zionism as the "realization of a [secular] prophesy." In fact, according to the Yishuv leadership, the "law of redemption" was considered to be, "an actual law of nature according to which Jewish history progressed" (Almog 2000, 42).

put it, “the aim of our revival effort is the building [*binyan*] of the Land [*binyan ha’aretz*]” (Ben-Gurion 1955).

Building was viewed as a double act, one which transformed the self as well as the national space. Other Zionist thinkers also took up the motif of building, describing it as the “center of our goals” (A. D. Gordon 1936, 51), the entry key upon which would unlock the building of a nation [*binyan leumi*]. Further elaborating on the primacy of building, Ben-Gurion went on to describe what this form of ‘*binyan ha’aretz*’ required, namely: “paving roads, establishing means of communication, uncovering natural treasures, constructing industry, and so on. This is what it means to create a homeland” (Ben-Gurion 1955; Chowers 2002).

If building provided an organizing framework for early Zionists, then centralized planning would offer the tools for materializing the desire to build a nation [*binyan leumi*] as a reality in Palestine. As both a material and ideological approach to spatial transformation, modern central planning was a means for binding words and things; “it was the Zionist spirit itself, emanating from layers of fictional prose, ideological manifestos, and programmatic protocols” (Efrat 2014, 107). As Herzl himself explained in *The Jewish State*, “we shall not dwell in mud huts; we shall build new more beautiful and more modern houses” (Herzl 1904, 12). When one of the founders of Tel Aviv explains to Herzl that they lacked the funds to fulfill his vision, he responds: but “a plan we do have.” The plan, according to Herzl, would be simple in its design but complicated in its execution: it entailed the rapid construction of “roads, bridges, railways, and telegraphs,” through which Zionist labor would, “create trade, trade will create markets, and markets will attract new settlers” (Herzl 1904, 26).

During the Mandate years, the Zionist project in Palestine would have to contend with the growing gap between the “plan” as envisioned by Herzl and the reality of Palestine as a largely

non-Jewish state governed by an imperial state. For Zionist organizations, the inescapable problems of demography and nation-building would take center stage in the immediate aftermath of the first World War as Palestine became a protectorate of the British Mandate.

4. Planning Statehood During the Mandate: Building a "State within a State"

In the transition to British rule, for the first time, Palestine emerged as a distinct geographic and political entity. The Mandate government brought with it detailed blueprints and models of colonial development that had been borne out of their experiences in Rhodesia, Sudan, Malta, and other imperial contexts (Biger 1983). Proceeding with these pre-established ideas about how to govern in a colonial space, the Mandate set about carving Palestine into administrative units, establishing civil service departments for overseeing public health and finance, streamlining the complex Ottoman legal system, commissioning a police force, conducting population surveys, and centralizing urban planning (Samuel 1957; Reuveny 1993; Shapira 1999; Segev 2014; El-Eini 2006; Stanton 2013). From the incorporation of the Palestine Railway to the printing of the Palestine Post, Palestine was bounded as a discrete territory vested with its own national identity.

While Mandate administrators remade the bureaucratic, legal, and spatial organization of everyday life in Palestine, their plans to "develop" modern Palestine ran up against the impossibility of reconciling competing promises made to its Jewish and Palestinian populations. In 1917, for example, the British government had formally declared its support for Herzl's plan of expanding the Zionist settler-colonialism project with the publication of the Balfour Declaration. Issued by Arthur Balfour on behalf of Britain's wartime cabinet, the declaration comprised a single sentence:

> His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country (Balfour 1917).

In fewer than 70 words, the Balfour Declaration effectively legitimated Herzl's vision of Jewish statehood and sovereignty over Palestine. The indigenous Palestinian inhabitants – who at the time of the declaration were 94% of the population – received only an oblique mention by way of a reference to the "existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." As Rashid Kahlidi observes, the Balfour Declaration described Palestinians exclusively "in terms of what they were not, and certainly not as a nation or a people" (Rashid Khalidi 2020, 24). At most, Balfour guaranteed Palestinians "civil and religious rights," but notably made no promise to vouchsafe them political or national rights. By contrast, Balfour imputed national rights to the "Jewish people," who in 1917, made up roughly 6% of Palestine's inhabitants (Abu-Lughod 1973; Lawrence 1952).

Unable to resolve the clash between "democratic principles and demographic realities," Mandate administrators sought to neutralize the political crisis in Palestine by reframing issues of land use and immigration as mere technical problems that could be settled through the apolitical sciences of planning, hydrology, and engineering. In particular, British officials hoped that large infrastructural development projects, such as the electrification of Palestine's grid, would offer enough material benefits to Palestinian communities to overcome their concerns about the rising rate of Jewish immigration (Shamir 2013; Meiton 2018). Even as Britain handed the contract for building a powerhouse and laying down the grid lines to a prominent member of

the Yishuv, Pinchas Rutenberg, officials stressed that the project served a "common good" intended to be of use to all of Palestine's confessional communities.

Despite the British contention that their proposed infrastructural schemes transcended politics, the Yishuv endorsed these colonial projects because they saw them as essential vehicles for Jewish state building. In some quarters of London, British officials quietly agreed with this assessment. As the head of the Middle East Department of the British Colonial Office wrote on hearing that the concession for the Palestine Electrical Company was granted to a member of the Yishuv: "We are giving to a Jewish organisation a grip over the whole economic life of Palestine" (Meiton 2018, 7). In a few short years, this concern would prove valid, as the Yishuv gained a near-monopoly over emerging infrastructures in Palestine. For all intents and purposes, this amounted to giving the Yishuv "control over the apparatuses of internal self-government" (Rashid Khalidi 2007, 37). By the end of the 1930s, the Yishuv had formed a "state within a state," built in large part through the consolidation of the rights to the grid, irrigable land, and the water that powered both technologies.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Palestinian communities looked upon these spatial, demographic, and infrastructural revolutions with mounting apprehension. Considering the rail and grid lines that promised to plug in Jewish towns, businesses, and farms to a single network, many Palestinians felt they had been cut out of the technical systems that critically enable the circulation of political power. By 1923 – only months after the first Palestinian powerhouse began delivering light, heat, and energy to residents of Tel Aviv – Palestinians in Jaffa demonstrated against electrification, chanting: "Rutenberg's lampposts are our nation's gallows" (Meiton 2018, 1). Meanwhile, in other areas of the country, such as Nablus, popular anger turned on the fact that they had been purposively left off the grid map. Across Palestinian cities and

village, resistance to British and Zionist enterprises would increasingly entail attacks on urban infrastructures – that is, on the physical and institutional sites associated with colonial rule.

As the Yishuv's aim of creating a "state within a state" came into view, Palestinian leaders recognized the need to build their own national organizations. But despite the urgency of the situation, nascent efforts at Palestinian state-building were repeatedly stymied by the Mandate's "recognition trap" (S. Robinson 2013, 29). British officials demanded that the Arab Executive recognize the legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration as a precondition for negotiations (Rashid Khalidi 2020, 46). Palestinian leaders, in turn, refused to enter into any political forum that denied their right to self-determination, much less refused to even acknowledge them by name (Rashid Khalidi 2020, 47). Caught in this impasse, the Palestinian National Congress, and its offshoot the Arab Executive, could make little headway with British officials in Jerusalem or London.

At the same time, Mandate officers also struggled to make sense of their dual mission to both guide Palestine to self-rule while also facilitating the establishment of a Jewish national home. The irreconcilable British policy commitments to, on the one hand, administering Palestine under the post-War League of Nations Mandate for the "benefit of its native population," and, on the other hand, the promise to fulfill the Balfour Declaration by establishing a "national home for the Jewish people," paved the way for intensifying intercommunal violence from 1922 to 1947.

Between 1936-1939, the slowly simmering tensions between Jewish and Palestinian communities finally boiled over as the Palestinian leadership called for a General Strike and began organizing an armed rebellion. In contrast to earlier episodes of intercommunal violence, the 1936-1939 Great Arab Revolt made the colonial state its primary target. Palestinian rebels

attacked the railway, grid lines, police stations, post offices, courthouses, and the Mosul-Haifa pipeline. At the same time, the rebels established their own, parallel state institutions, including a rebel-run postal system. These efforts even extended to trying to build an alternative power supply that could compete against the Yishuv's energy infrastructure (Meiton 2018, 152). While the combined force of Zionist paramilitaries and British counterinsurgency troops eventually suppressed the rebellion, the material legacy of the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt endures in the uneven development of Israeli and Palestinian state spaces (N. Smith 2008).

For Zionist organizations, the success of the "state within a state" plan also engendered its greatest challenge: widespread resistance from Palestinian communities who had begun to organize politically, and in some cases, militarily. Along with the growing realization that Palestinian communities would not be easily pacified, the Yishuv also had to reckon with the fact that the Jewish community remained a minority population in Palestine. While Jewish immigration to Palestine had accelerated dramatically during the first years of the Mandate, the continued demographic imbalance meant that Zionist agencies held far more deeds to Palestinian lands than they could effectively "settle" with the existing Jewish population.

5. Wall and Tower: Architecture in the Service of Colonialism

Faced with the need to hold territory that had been officially purchased by Zionist organizations but could not yet be settled upon, the Yishuv developed novel spatial tactics designed to secure provisional strongholds along the Palestinian frontier. Their main strategy took the architectural form of a DIY-ed settlement edifice, the "Wall and Tower," which would

eventually impinge on almost every aspect of Palestine's built form (Rotbard 2003; Azoulay 2000; Dickinson 2018).[5]

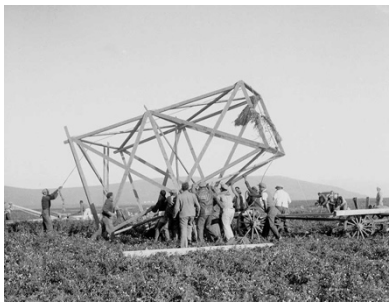

Figure 2 Setting up Homa UMigdal in 1937. Photo from the Zionist Archive (PHG\1074853).

No aspect of architectural history expresses the spatial logic of early Zionist colonization better than the "Wall and Tower" (*Homa uMigdal)* network built in Palestine during the 1930s (see Figure 2).[6] Amid the 1936-1939 Palestinian uprisings, Zionist agencies faced growing difficulties in acquiring and settling Palestinian lands. In response, the Yishuv adopted drastic measures to push forward a "settlement offensive." As the Zionist Regional Committee itself declared after adopting the Wall and Tower design plans, "we are at the beginning of a new era of fortified walls, in spite of our neighbors' dismay" (Frenkel 1976). While seemingly drab and unremarkable in outward appearance, the Wall and Tower system would, in a short period of time, forever transform the built environment of Palestine.

The key feature of these mobile offensive/defensive structures was they could be built within a day, sprouting pinpoints of observation and territorial control almost overnight.[7] The

[5] The invention of the Wall and Tower system is credited to Shlomo Gur, founding member of Kibbutz Tel Amal, and to the architect-soldier Yohanan Ratner (Efrat 2014; Rotbard 2006).
[6] *Homa uMigdal* can also be translated as "tower and stockade," but "wall and tower" better captures its barebones aesthetic.
[7] Another driving force behind the Wall and Tower system was the need to overcome British Mandate restrictions on new settlements. The Yishuv found a loophole in Ottoman law, which had largely remained in effect during the Mandate period. Under Ottoman law, a structure "could not be demolished if the roof has been completed" (Ross 2019). Thanks to this clause, instant

basic building blocks for the Wall and Tower system were prefabricated wooden molds and barbed wire. Quickly stitched together around a prefab wooden tower, the entire perimeter of the Wall and Tower edifice was no more than 35-by-35 meters. Inside this enclosed space, builders would erect four shacks housing forty settlers (Rotbard 2003, 42).

In both design and function, the Wall and Tower expressed in physical form the internal contradictions of 20th Zionism's relationship to Palestine's landscape. On the one hand, the Wall and Tower was conceptualized as a key architectural device for expanding the territorial reach of a Jewish state and naturalizing Jewish subjects claim to being rooted in the land. On the other hand, the design of the Wall and Tower was premised on the idea that the Palestinian frontier represented a hostile, foreign land – one that had to be seized by force and then monitored from behind a barricaded wall. In the end, these conflicting spatial ideals found resolution in the defensive-offensive architectural construct that turned residential areas into potential battlefields under constant surveillance and repurposed civilian settlements as paramilitary stations charged with seizing provisional strongholds until state forces could secure the territory.

The Wall and Tower network connected local clusters and formed a tangible spatial matrix in otherwise "unsettled" territory. Every Wall and Tower outpost had to be lodged within eyesight to another, forming a link between each node in the widening settlement setwork. By securing visual proximity, settlers could begin assembling makeshift communication infrastructures, starting with the transmission of messages between towers using mirrors and flashlights to signal Morse code (Rotbard 2006, 108). In the process, the Yishuv laid the

settlements, built overnight, were safe from demolition. The Wall and Tower system made use of this legal artifact, building insta-settlements which, in turn, created new "facts on ground."

groundwork for wiring these isolated outposts into larger infrastructural projects, making them integral to Zionist state building.

Although the burgeoning Wall and Tower network effectively extended the territorial boundaries of the Yishuv, the emphasis remained on occupying strategic locations rather than on developing fully formed settlements. The implicit conceit of the Wall and Tower was that the "work of colonial settlement was less immediately important," than the institution of a settlement point. The idea was to establish, in the shortest period of time, "a chain of new settlements that would create a Jewish continuum and define the future borderline of the State of Israel" (Rotbard 2006, 103). This continuum took the form of the letter "N" – stretching from the northern sectors of the Jordan and Beit Shean Valleys and the Litoral plain southwards to the Negev desert – prefiguring the geopolitical emergence of a future Israeli state.

The institution of these outposts, dotted along key points in the landscape, not only stabilized the boundaries of a Zionist colonial geography, but also precipitated the political fault lines that define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. Between 1936 and 1939, Zionist builders set up nearly sixty such outposts, which taken together, formed the contours of the eventual "Green Line," the armistice border negotiated in 1949. As the Israeli architect Sharon Rotbard has written, the intermeshed Wall and Tower network deployed along the 'N' plan, "materialized the borderlines of the State of Israel until 1967 and shaped its only consensual form" (Rotbard 2006, 105).

For historians of early Zionist architecture, the Wall and Tower system stands out not only as emblematic of the pre-state territorial strategy, but more so, for the ways in which it anticipated future Israeli spatial interventions. In many ways, the original Wall and Tower design contained all of the chief ingredients that would eventually distinguish Israeli planning including

a “hasty translation of political will” into built forms that facilitate territorial occupation through the establishment of settlement points and emergent infrastructural lines (Efrat 2014; Rotbard 2006).

The two principal functions of the Wall and Tower – surveillance and fortification – would dominate Israeli spatial planning from the foundation of the state to today. During the early statehood days, Israeli planners held up the mobile outpost model as the “rhetorical springboard for the country’s continuing settlement project,” making it an essential component of “the national policy of demographic dispersal and militarized settlement” (Efrat 2014, 80). As Moshe Sharet, a prominent leader of the Labor Movement, argued, the outposts were key weapons in Israel’s growing spatial arsenal: there is, “no more effective weapon than founding settlements in [border] areas, *and thereby creating facts*” (Sharett 1971, emphasis mine). Echoing this sentiment, the country’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, also championed the expanded settlement offensive, which in turn, ensured that it would become one of the main missions of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

To wit, one of the first acts Ben-Gurion undertook in office was to oversee the creation of an IDF division, the *Nahal* (“Fighting Pioneering Youth”), whose purpose was to combine combat and settlement activities. As Ben-Gurion explained to the new recruits during the inaugural parade for the *Nahal* unit: “not with silent stone fortifications but with the labor and creation of a living human wall, the only wall that is able to resist the enemy’s weaponry. *The only sustainable occupation resides in building*” (Ben-Gurion 1986, 104, emphasis mine). Innovating upon the original Wall and Tower model, the *Nahal* continued to operationalize the settlement offensive by constructing new edifices in strategic locations along the 1948-9 armistice line.

The physical and ideological mold of the Wall and Tower remains central to modern Israeli planning, as encapsulated in the installation of settlements on hilltops and the proliferation of observation points built into the fabric of new constructions (Segal and Weizman 2003; Yacobi 2004; Hanafi 2006; Hilal, Petti, and Weizman 2009). Like its modern-day equivalent – the prefabricated mobile homes used by hilltop settlements in the occupied West Bank – the Wall and Tower took on the outward posture of unhampered mobility, relentless expansion, and the churning out of new "facts on the ground" (Abu El-Haj 2001). In practice, both the Wall and Tower network of the 1930s and the modern mobile home function not simply as architectural constructs but as promises of things to come – of more settlements, roads, infrastructure, and lines of communication.

6. Militarizing Palestine in the 1940s

By the start of the 1940s, the Wall and Tower network formed just one part of a growing Zionist paramilitary structure in Palestine. During the last years of the Mandate, the Yishuv redirected its attention away from civilian settlement activities to concentrate on arming Zionist militias in preparation for what they viewed as the "inevitable" war to come (Morris 2008).[8] To a lesser extent, Palestinian nationalists also attempted to form local militias, such as the *Najjada* and *Futuwwa* youth organizations, but they were hampered by recent defeats incurred during the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt, a lack of arms, and the fragmentation of the Palestinian national leadership (Rashid Khalidi 2009; 2020).[9]

[8] For more on the formation of the Zionist paramilitaries, including the Haganah, Lehi, and Etzel (Irgun) see Morris 2004.

[9] In contrast to the well-armed Zionist outfits, the Israeli historian Benny Morris describes the main activity of Palestinian militias as consisting of: "noisy parades in town squares; little, if any, military training took place" (Morris 2008, 88).

Amid the rapidly militarizing conflict, British officials began to complain that their mission in Palestine was both unworkable and an anathema to "the spirit of the twentieth century" (Pedersen 2015, 388). Sensing the Mandate's untenable position, Jewish and Palestinian militias separately launched attacks on British buildings and infrastructure associated with foreign rule during the 1930s and early 1940s. Unable to wrest control from either the militarized Zionist factions or Palestinian insurgents, by 1947, the British government agreed to terminate the Mandate. After having overseen, and in a several instances helped foment, two decades of violent clashes in Palestine, Britain ultimately abdicated from deciding the question of Palestine's future. Instead, its fate was placed in the hands of the newly formed United Nations.

7. 1947: The Partition of Palestine at the UN

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181, partitioning the territory into Arab and Jewish states while carving out the "holy areas" of Jerusalem and Bethlehem as an international zone. When news of the UN's Partition Plan reached Palestine, it was met with waves of popular protests and urban violence, which within a matter of weeks, escalated into a full-scale civil war (S. Robinson 2013, 24). Though the first clashes took place primarily in the "mixed" cities of Haifa, Tiberias, and Jerusalem, the escalating conflict quickly shifted in focus, first to a struggle over roads and eventually encompassing mass population transfers in Palestinian majority areas.

While the Yishuv never openly endorsed wholescale population transfer as a war aim, Zionist leaders had privately contemplated the possibility of transferring Palestinian subjects for several years prior to the *Nakba*. In October 1941, for example, the future prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, formulated a blueprint for postwar Zionism that relied on the assumption that there would be, "massive transfers of population as part of the post-war

settlement" (Morris 2004, 51). Without a transfer policy, he argued, the future of a Jewish state would be rendered demographically unstable: "Only a state with at least 80% Jews is a viable and stable state" (cited in Gendzier 2015, 65). While some members of the Yishuv raised questions about the morality of population transfer, most of the Zionist leadership came to readily accept the expediency of such a policy (Shahak 1989)

Even as members of the United Nations Generally Assembly reviewed plans for the partition of Palestine, Zionist politicians and military officers were debating the possibility of mass transfers with renewed interest. In the days leading up to the vote on partition, Ben-Gurion began to publicly argue that, along with the demographic concerns, Palestinians within a new Jewish state would constitute a dangerous "fifth column." To deal with this threat, he concluded that, Palestinians "can either be mass arrested or expelled; it is better to expel them" (Ben-Gurion 1947). Notably, even as the UN sought to lay the groundwork for the creation of bifurcated Jewish and Palestinian states, little was done internationally to minimize the risk of mass expulsions in the weeks and months preceding partition and the 1948 war.

8. Planned Destruction, 1947-1949: The Nakba Years

The chaotic sequence of events that unfolded in the spring of 1948 – which Palestinians collectively remember as the *Nakba,* the catastrophe or disaster – culminated in the expulsion of over 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, resulting in the largest, still-unresolved refugee crisis of the 20th century (UNHCR 2006). By May of 1948, Zionist forces had adopted a sweeping plan, codenamed Plan Dalet, which laid out the military strategy for depopulating Palestinian villages and erasing much of Palestine's existing built environment.[10] The plan

[10] The new military plan, "Plan Dalet," is often abbreviated as "Plan D" (Morris 2004).

specified three primary objectives: to "occupy [Palestinian] communities, expel the residents, and raze the villages" (Kadman 2015, 10). Or as the Israeli novelist S. Yizhar would later sum up the military orders handed down in the Spring of 1948 in the opening lines to his novella about the war, *Khirbet Khizeh*: "burn-blow-up-imprison-load-convey" (Yizhar 2014, 1). As captured by Yizhar's account of the war, the militias saw the expulsion of population as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for stabilizing the political boundaries of the new Jewish state. Rather, for Israel to successfully exert full control over its conquered territory, the state would need to displace not only the indigenous Palestinian population, but also the physical sites and built environments that had sustained Palestinian communities until 1948.

As word spread that Zionist forces had launched attacks on small, undefended Palestinian villages, followed by radio reports of massacres and coordinated strikes on urban infrastructure in the cities, panic swept through every Palestinian community. In one month alone, from early-May to early-June of 1948, it is estimated that between 250,000-300,000 Palestinians sought refuge from the intensifying conflict in the relative safety of southern Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and so forth (Morris 2004; Kadman 2015).

By the time the first cease-fire was negotiated in June 1948, the geography of the new state of Israel looked radically different than it had been envisioned less than a year prior during the UN debate over partition. The mass expulsions had achieved their intended aim of securing a Jewish demographic majority within the now greatly expanded borders of the state of Israel. The political leadership of the Yishuv – by now, the Israeli political leadership – viewed this as a major success of the first phase of the war and committed to permanently blocking the return of the refugees.

For the sake of sustaining the ongoing armistice negotiations, the Israeli government's official position was that refugees would not be allowed to return so long as the war remained unresolved. But even as Israeli negotiators attempted to dodge the refugee issue, the Israeli public was repeatedly assured in the press and in radio addresses that the return of refugees would never be allowed, whether in war or in peacetime. Further underscoring the importance of this policy, during one of the first cabinet meetings of the newly elected Israeli government, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion opened session by declaring to his ministers that he would never authorize the return of the refugees (Kadman 2015, 12).

In order to permanently cement the expulsion of Palestinian refugees, Zionist forces attacked not only Palestinian population centers, but also existing buildings, roads, and infrastructure. In his personal diary, David Ben-Gurion recalled admonishing the paramilitaries to train their weapons not only on the inhabitants of Palestinian villages, but also on their places of residence: "we must issue a decisive blow; the destruction of the place or the expulsion of residents along with the seizure of the place" (Ben-Gurion 1982, 58). By May of 1948, Hagenah militia leaders began enacting Ben-Gurion's vision by extending the "military campaign against the Arabs" to the "conquest and destruction" of all Palestinian-majority areas (Flapan 1987a, 93).

The Hagenah militia units carried out the obliteration of Palestine's built forms in two stages. First, while laying siege to one of the villages or neighborhoods that were on a particular unit's target list, they would open hostilities with a battery of light artillery before setting fire to homes, properties, and goods (Flapan 1987b, 11). Once the unit ensured that all of the Palestinian inhabitants in the area had either fled or were killed in action, the second phase involved: "planting mines among the rubble to prevent any of the expelled inhabitants from

returning" (Pappe 2007, 28). To grasp the extent of this campaign, see Figure 3 for a survey of destruction cataloged in Palestinian villages after 1948.

Table 1. Palestinian Villages Depopulated in 1948 by Levels of Housing Destruction and Occupancy and by Sub-district. Credit: Falah 1996.

Subdistrict	Pre-1948 Localities		Total Depopulated Villages	Levels of Destruction and Occupancy*						
	Total	Urban		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Acre	56	1	26	1	13	3	6	1	2	0
Beersheba	4	1	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Baysan	32	1	29	17	8	3	1	0	0	0
Gaza	58	3	45	10	17	5	11	1	1	0
Haifa	61	2	51	8	20	7	7	1	5	3
Hebron	37	1	16	3	7	2	2	0	2	0
Jaffa	24	1	23	4	0	0	10	1	8	0
Jerusalem	87	4	38	0	13	8	5	3	8	1
Jinin	68	1	6	1	3	1	1	0	0	0
Nablus	94	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nazareth	25	1	4	0	2	1	1	0	0	0
al-Ramla	74	2	58	10	12	8	10	7	5	5
Ramallah	60	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Safad	82	1	77	17	27	14	14	1	3	1
Tiberais	29	1	25	4	13	6	1	0	0	1
Tulkarm	72	1	17	5	4	0	5	2	1	0
Total	**863**	**18**	**418**	**81**	**140**	**60**	**74**	**17**	**35**	**11**
%	**100**	**2**	**100**	**19.4**	**33.5**	**14.3**	**17.7**	**4.1**	**8.4**	**2.6**

***The seven subcategories included here are:**

1) complete obliteration;
2) complete destruction; rubble of original houses clearly identified; no walls standing;
3) houses are mostly demolished; rubble contains walls standing but without roofs;
4) most houses demolished; at least one house standing with roof intact; no Jewish-family-occupied houses intact;
5) most houses demolished; one or two houses occupied by Jewish families;
6) partial destruction; more than two Jewish families occupy houses;
7) inaccessible villages.

Figure 3 Levels of Destruction in 1948 by Location, Occupancy, and District. Credit: Falah 1996.

The assault on Palestine's built environment was not an unfortunate byproduct of the 1948 war, but rather one of its main objectives; it was intended to render historic Palestine unrecognizable and inaccessible in the eyes of recent refugees. Nor was the significance of home demolitions as a spatial tactic designed to impede returning refugees lost on the rank-and-file paramilitaries who carried out Plan Dalet. In the words of Yerachmiel Kahanovich, a former paramilitary who served directly under the Palmach commander, Yigal Allon:

Interviewer: Why did you blow up the houses?

YK: To solve the problem…

Interviewer: I don't get it. Please explain it again.

> YK: You have to understand: Say, if for some reason, I have to run away...I'll want to go back to the house, right? But when this house is gone, it's gone. I look at it like the Arab does: it's my village, but when the village is gone, that's it. It's gone.

As the war against Palestine's built environment escalated during the Spring and Summer of 1948, Zionist forces broadened the campaign of burnings and demolitions to a host of new structures, including workshops, storerooms, cattle pens, nurseries, and orchards (Flapan 1987b, 11). As the Palestinian geographer Ghazi Falah argues, the *Nakba* cannot be analyzed independently of these spatial tactics, since the depopulations of 1948 were almost always a prelude to "place annihilation" and "landscape erasures" (Falah 1996, 258).

Even after the 1949 armistice agreement came into effect, Israeli forces continued the work of demolishing any remaining Palestinian homes, schools, libraries, along with the ruins of physical infrastructure left behind in the now depopulated Palestinian towns. This process continued unabated for at least two years after the cessation of active hostilities. A final round of demolitions ensued in the mid-1960s, when the Israel Land Administration (ILA) initiated the "clearing" of all remaining villages depopulated in 1948, which ILA officials described as "blots on the landscape" (Shai 2006, 91).

Although the ILA demolition of the 1960s took place nearly two decades after the *Nakba*, in practical terms, it was a continuation of the spatial tactics adopted in 1948 aimed at preventing the return of refugees. As one ILA official later recalled to the Israeli archeologist, Aron Shai: we wanted to "prevent a situation" where a former villager might come and say, "this is my tree. This was my village" (cited in Shai 2006, 93). After Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the ILA accelerated and expanded their planned demolitions, largely out of concern that Palestinian refugees living in the now occupied territories might attempt to pilgrimage to their

original homes. In total, the ILA targeted 131 villages for "cleaning," obliterating some of the last surviving Palestinian structures in the process (Shai 2006; Kadman 2015).

In retrospect, the 1948 war and its aftermath can be understood, in part, as an exercise in spatial and demographic engineering. Through a combination of mass forced expulsions, targeted strikes on Palestinian urban areas, and the physical destruction of over 450 Palestinian villages, Zionist forces sought to create a Jewish-majority state as a fact on the ground. At the same time, the *Nakba* – as a collective Palestinian trauma – does not simply refer to the loss and dispossession that accompanied the expulsions, but moreover, to the continued denial of return. For this reason, the *Nakba* cannot be isolated as a unique, historical rupture in time; so long as the refugees of 1948 are barred from returning to their homes, villages, and communities, the collective experience of the *Nakba* persists in the present.

9. Planning the State: Concretizing The Nakba in the Post-1948 Israeli Built Environment

In the wake of the 1948 *Nakba,* Israeli officials were, at last, presented with the version of the country that had been imagined by early Zionists – a *tabula rasa* space, emptied of its indigenous inhabitants. But the reality of spatial planning post-1948 turned out to be quite different than suggested by the fantasy of possessing an uninhabited "virgin" land. On 3 May 1949, only days of concluding an armistice agreement, the Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion opened a government protocol meeting with the following statement:

> If you look at the map you will see that the South contains many empty places, and nothing causes me so great a horror as this emptiness—not because nature cannot withstand emptiness, but because people cannot stand it, and politics cannot withstand emptiness (cited in Ofori-Amoah 2007, 333).

Resolved to populate the "emptiness," a term which encoded not only the geography of "baren" deserts in the South but also the Palestinian villages depopulated between 1947-1949, Ben-Gurion committed his government to turning the new Israeli state into "one big construction site" (Efrat 2014, 131). As he put it in an earlier speech given at the start of the *Nakba*, Israel's future security would rest on its ability to remake the landscape in the image of a Jewish state:

> The security of the state will not rest exclusively on the armed forces...Not silent stone forts, but *a living, working and productive human wall*—the only wall that is neither deterred nor damaged by enemy firepower (cited in Tzfadia 2009, 47, emphasis mine).

The top architect charged with implementing Ben-Gurion's vision was a young Bauhaus-school graduate named Arieh Sharon. In the immediate aftermath of the *Nakba*, Sharon recruited a "brigade of planners" – including eight architects, urban planners, and engineers – who would ultimately publish the first Israeli master plan.[11] However, Ben-Gurion continued to keep close tabs on Sharon's planning unit, insisting that the department operate within the Prime Minister's office and granting Sharon's team extensive resources (Yiftachel 2010, 79).

Collectively, Sharon and his team set out to produce a programmatic "building manual" for the Israeli state. Completed in just over a year, the final version of the 1950-1951 Master Plan was published under the title, *Physical Planning in Israel*, but is informally referred to as the Sharon Plan. The core of the resulting document envisioned a planned web of "civilian fortifications" – spanning from rural frontier settlements in the depopulated Galilee and smaller outposts along cease-fire lines to a network of hybrid civilian-military sites and a rhizomatic road

[11] In the vision of Bauhaus director Hannes Meyers, a "planning brigade" was comprised of draftsmen, architects, engineers, etc. A master architect would act as the "major general," overseeing the technical "troops," directing all of the brigade sectors, and ensuring fulfillment of the "plan."

system traversing the Central and Southern region. While Israeli planners publish iterative updates to the state master planning documents (now referred to as TAMA), the genetic blueprint for future Israeli planning was contained in the original Sharon Plan and continues to shape Israeli spatial ideologies, practices, and aspirations.

The Sharon Plan was singular in its scope and ambition. The plan: "set forth in one go a single layout, a single vision, a single stately concept," projecting the nation on a scale of 1:20,000 (Efrat 2014, 130). Almost immediately, Israeli town planners, architects, builders, and engineers began incorporating the designs of the Sharon Plan into every new building, locality, and neighborhood constructed in the first decades of statehood. In this way, Israeli builders implemented the Sharon Plan "almost verbatim," committing to its blueprint "through the systematic reproduction of zoning doctrines, building typologies, and construction methods" (Efrat 2014, 108). Within a few years, the Sharon Plan gave birth to almost 400 rural settlements – approximately the number of Palestinian villages depopulated in 1948 – along with 30 New Towns (Yiftachel 2010).

Sharon and his brigade of planners conceived of planning as a tool for territorial consolidation and expansion. To wit, during the early statehood years, Israeli planners and builders would colloquially describe their professional practice as "conquering the land." To achieve this end, the Sharon Plan innovated on the Wall and Tower by making geographic dispersal – the "scattering" of settlements – a key aspect of the master plan. By giving priority to the establishment of new settlements, the plan reinforced the older spatial logic of the Wall and Tower; in other words, "the most settlements on the most space" (Yiftachel 2010).

In tandem with the enormous output of new housing construction, the Sharon Plan laid the groundwork for an extensive network of national parks, roads, upgraded ports, and sweeping

infrastructural projects. In the first years of its implementation, investment in infrastructure exceeded any other period before or after in modern Israeli history (Efrat 2014, 131). This included comprehensive infrastructural works, designed not only for long-term physical development but also to realize earlier Zionist aspirations. In practice, this often meant investing substantial funds in sparsely populated spaces, such as the Negev desert, because these areas were coded as crucial to Zionism's original charge of "masking the desert bloom."

Alongside the development of new towns, settlements, and infrastructure, the Sharon Plan also sought to transform the landscape through widespread afforestation. In his address during the inaugural session of the Israeli Parliament, Ben-Gurion stressed to members of the Knesset that territorial security required not only new buildings, but also new trees:

> We must plant many hundreds of thousands of trees...We must wrap all the mountains of the country and their slopes with trees. We must plant for security reasons, along all the borders, along all the roads, routes and path (cited in S. E. Cohen 1993, 61).

The Sharon Plan took heed of Ben-Gurion's admonishment by prioritizing the work of afforestation. In fact, the master plan assigned all territory not reserved for agricultural or construction use to the forestry division. Significantly, Palestinian villages depopulated during the *Nakba* were among the first to be afforested. This was no coincidence; Israeli planners understood that afforestation would fulfill a double function by not only shoring up territorial control but also effectively concealing the destruction of Palestine's built environment behind the fig leaf of new forests.

Even as the Sharon Plan sought to plant over the ruins of historic Palestine, it also contained plans for plumbing its depths to secure proof that the state of Israel represented an authentic national return to a deep past (Abu El-Haj 2001). While working on the first draft of

the master plan, Sharon called into a Jerusalem radio station to relay news that his team, in cooperation with the Antiquities Department of the Hebrew University, had discovered new archeological and historical sites that would be earmarked for further exploration under the new plan (Sharon 1949). Echoing the view of the state's resident archeologists, Sharon went on explain that he viewed the discovery of "Israelite ruins" as confirmation of the "modern Jewish right to the land" (Silberman 1989, 9). As Nadia Abu El-Haj (2001) argues, Sharon's inclusion of archeology in Israel's master plan reflected a broader project of establishing Israel as having always already been a Jewish state, by forging a connection between contemporary Israeli citizens and an imagined Jewish past embodied by artifacts culled from buried layers in the land.

10. Palestinian IDPs: The Legal & Spatial Construction of "Absence"

At the same time as Arieh Sharon and his team of planners were building new settlements for Jewish immigrants, Israeli policymakers introduced legal and spatial procedures for formalizing the territorial dispossession of Palestinians displaced between 1947-1948. While the state quickly moved to expropriate property from expelled Palestinians, it initially struggled to find a justification for confiscating lands belonging to the minority of Palestinians who had been displaced from their homes in 1948 but had remained within the borders of what would become the State of Israel.

After facing significant international pressure to accept the return of refugees, Israel agreed to allow around 75,000 Palestinians – many of whom came from the depopulated villages in the north and in the Jerusalem area – to remain as residents of the new state. But it did so under the condition that the small minority of Palestinians would be barred from either returning

or reclaiming their villages, as was the case for my interlocuters from the villages of Al-Ruways, Mi'ar, and Yajur (see Chapter 6).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Israeli state planners and policymakers worked to create a comprehensive juridical and bureaucratic framework for making the dispossession of internally displaced Palestinians a permanent fact on the ground. The turning point came in 1950 with the Knesset's passage of the Law of Absentee Property, which created a new legal category to classify internally displaced Palestinians as "present absentees":

> Thus they were "present," unlike the hundreds of thousands of their compatriots who had been driven out altogether. But because they had been displaced from their homes, they were, like the Palestinian refugees now in Lebanon or Jordan, also "absentees," and their family property was confiscated by the state, to be given over to national—that is, Jewish—institutions (Makdisi 2010b, 231).

The far-reaching scope of the law dashed any hope that internally displaced Palestinians might recover their homes, villages, or communities. Instead, the state appointed a custodian to oversee the transfer and sale of their lands. In total, the 1950 law transferred more than 3 million dunums of Palestinian lands to Israeli institutions, making the state custodian "Israel's largest landlord" in urban areas (Kretzmer 2019, 63).

Even after ratifying the permeant dispossession of "present absentees," however, Israeli officials still looked upon the existence of a minority Palestinian population as a demographic and spatial threat to the long-term survival of Jewish state. In a bid to contain the danger they perceived in the continued presence of a minority Palestinian community within the state's borders, Israel imposed a regime of military governance that ruled uninterrupted until 1966 (S. Robinson 2013). The combined effect of these two major Israeli policies towards displaced

Palestinians – the application of military rule and territorial dispossession – effectively rendered Palestinians in Israel as strangers in their own land.

When the decades-long regime of martial law finally came to an end in 1966, refugees from villages like al-Ruways were still barred from repatriating or rebuilding on their historic village lands. Enumerating some of the reasons why Israeli officials sought to place the depopulated villages off-limits to Palestinian citizens of the state, the governor of Nazareth explained in a 1949 letter: "These villages were mostly centers of resistance against our forces and are located in areas that are purely clean from Arab presence and are settled by Jews" (Quoted in H. Cohen 2000, 50). In other words, preventing displaced Palestinian from returning to their villages was understood as a means of severing communities from memories of resistance embedded in the landscape while also ensuring that its territorial development aligns with the aspirations of Jewish state building.

The Israeli state further reinforced the dispossession of internally displaced Palestinians by limiting their claims to citizenship. The 1952 Nationality Law repealed the Palestinian Citizenship Order, a Mandatory-era regulation that had recognized both native Palestinians and Jewish immigrants as nationals of Palestine, "resulting in the de facto denationalization of this entire population" (Erakat 2019, 58). In order to become Israeli citizens, Palestinians would have to prove they had remained inside the Green Line between 1948-1952, limiting citizenship access to those who met a narrowly defined concept of territorial residence. As a result, thousands of Palestinians who could not meet the criteria of the 1952 Nationality Law were rendered stateless.

Still wary of the "true loyalty" of Palestinians who became Israeli citizens, the state mandated their forced participation in national celebrations such as the "Day of Independence"

parades – that is, festivals that glorified Palestinian losses and the *Nakba*. In Elias Suleiman's 2010 film *The Time That Remains: Chronicle of a Present Absentee*, the humiliation and absurdity of these polices is captured in a short scene where an Israeli state official visiting a Palestinian elementary school is greeted by a long row of Israeli flags and a children's choir performing a Zionist melody (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Palestinian Schoolhouse Scene in the film, "The Times That Remains"

Throughout the years of military rule, 1948-1966, the state both required and recorded hundreds of similar performances of loyalty among Palestinian citizens.

Under these conditions, any mention or commemoration of the *Nakba* among Palestinian citizens of Israel remained a strictly private affair. Quoting a refugee from Saffuriyya, Noura Erakat explains how the political precarity experienced by internally displaced Palestinians limited the scope of their public speech:

> The military regime was still there, and no one dared to speak out…I remember as a girl how we were told never to take down the Israeli flag or we would be arrested and taken to prison. The mukhtars said that we had to carry out the government's orders (Erakat 2019, 53).

It was not until the first post-1948 generation came of age in the mid-1960s that the situation among Palestinian citizens began to change, first with the political mobilization surrounding Land Day and, later, with the initiation of *Nakba Day* commemorations.

11. 1967: Remembrances of Land Day and the Nakba

Much of the literature on Israel-Palestine since 1967 has focused on Israeli policies in the territories occupied during the June war, while in most cases, overlooking the pre-existing spatial and territorial practices that shaped the post-1967 reality.[12] But despite this framing, which views 1967 as a break from earlier patterns of Israeli state formation, the architecture of occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem explicitly builds on Israeli planning, zoning, and construction strategies used before and during the *Nakba*. In other words, 1967 and its aftermath represents a spatial and political continuation of the *Nakba* through other means.

Within the Green Line, Palestinian citizens face ongoing territorial dispossession, a process that accelerated in the 1960s when oversight and governance of almost all areas under Israeli control fell to the newly created Israel Land Administration (ILA). In order to facilitate the "Judaization" of depopulated Palestinian villages, the ILA prioritized Jewish ownership while blocking "the accessibility of Arab citizens to most lands" (Kedar and Yiftachel 2006, 140). By limiting the sale and transfer of new tracts to Jewish citizens of the state, the ILA ensured that Palestinian citizens had few options for purchasing title deeds.

[12] Historians of the occupation stress the politics of separation, embodied in the Separation Wall, the dual use road system, the imposition of checkpoints, and the fragmentation of Palestinian territories into disconnected islands of noncontiguous jurisdiction under the 1993 Oslo Agreement. Other scholars focus on the dual legal system that allows the Israeli judiciary to separate the application of laws within and without the Green Line.

Throughout the 1960s, successive Israeli legislatures pushed for ever greater enforcement of Judaization policies within the state's central planning apparatus. The passage of the Building and Planning Act (1965) codified this national spatial goal by legislating that all state-directed masterplans [TAMA] facilitate: "The realization of the goals of Israeli society…the realization of its Jewish character, the absorption of Jewish immigrants, and maintaining its democratic character" (BPA 1965 quoted in Fenster 2004, 408). As a result of this stipulation, the national steering committee that oversees TAMA implementation has never included a single Palestinian architect or planner in the annual review process (interview Y. Jabareen 2014). Predictably, the committee's failure to include Palestinian-majority areas in TAMA procedures resulted in an acute housing shortage and failing infrastructure in Palestinian communities (Fenster and Yacobi 2010).Worse yet, in towns lacking plans or deeds to new buildings, the state now had the power to declare all unplanned construction illegal and subject to demolition.

The ILA's post-1967 commitment to the Judaization of the Galilee and East Jerusalem was not merely a matter of securing and expanding territorial gains. Rather, Judaization policies had a "substantive spatial dimension," reflected in the zoning and planning of expropriated Palestinian lands (Stein 2008, 75). Recalling the 1930s Wall and Tower architectural model, beginning in the 1970s, Israeli planners drafted a network of settlements designated for strategic, hilltop locations known as *mitzpim* [lookouts]. Like their precursor, the Wall and Tower, the *mitzpim* were built to establish a "Jewish presence" in Palestinian-majority towns, while also serving as points of surveillance and defense against Palestinian "encroachment on public land" (Kedar and Yiftachel 2006). The state's rapid construction of *mitzpim* communities throughout the 1970s and 1980s hastened the spatial fragmentation of Palestinian lands and villages.

In this way, Israeli state-building has relied not only on legal and military means for asserting territorial control over depopulated Palestinian areas, but arguably more so, on a totalizing practice of spatial development. The tensions spurred by the state's land regime heightened in the mid-1970s, especially as the ILA authorized large land seizures in Palestinian-majority areas following the war of 1973 (Stein 1987; Jiryis 1976; Lustick 1980). Hence, in 1976, when the Israeli government announced plans to expropriate over 5,000 acres of land in the Galilee region, the National Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands declared March 30, 1976, to be Land Day and called for a general strike. Israeli forces fired on the Palestinian demonstrators, killing six, injuring seventy, and arresting hundreds more during the skirmishes that ensued between Israeli security forces and local villages (Falah 1991; Nakhleh 2011; Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2011).

Today, annual Land Day commemorations continue to form a major temporal locus of political mobilization among Palestinian citizens of Israel (Sorek 2015). As a country-wide organized movement that connected the struggles of internally displaced Palestinians with the experiences of military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, Land Day radically expanded the repertoire of protest tactics available to a new generation of activists. Moreover, the mass appeal of Land Day cut across the sectarian and geographic fault lines that had previously served to divide the Palestinian national space – unifying young Muslim, Christian, and Druze Palestinians through a shared commitment to resisting the ongoing confiscation of their lands.

Just as significantly, the ritualized remembrances enacted during annual Land Day marches provided a window of opportunity for young organizers to relate their own experiences of land expropriation in the 1970s to memories of the 1948 *Nakba*. Prior to this moment, familial memories of the *Nakba's* erasure of a Palestinian homeland rarely found expression in public

forums. Especially under the two-decades of martial law, internally displaced Palestinians feared speaking out about the events of the *Nakba* would only serve to spark another wave of military aggression against their already embattled communities. Hence, while the narratives and chronologies of the *Nakba* passed on through the circulation of private memories in tight-nit Palestinian communities, no real effort was made to force a public reckoning over what had transpired in Palestine during and after 1948.

Land Day marked the first time that remembrances of 1948 shifted from a set of discrete, private recollections to a public accounting of the collective losses of the *Nakba*. By the 1980s, Land Day organizers began incorporating visits to depopulated villages into the annual march, allowing a new generation of Palestinian activists to affirm a concrete and material bond with the destroyed spaces of their displaced village. As described in Chapter 3, these early forays into public commemorations of the *Nakba* have increased in significance since the collapse of the 1993 Oslo Agreement and the perceived failures of traditional nationalist politics to secure Palestinian rights.

12. Rise in Nakba Commemorations

At the same time, debates about the *Nakba* – a term once rarely spoken aloud in Israel – have taken on a new urgency among Jewish-Israelis, too. As Rebecca Stein (2010) has written, for Jewish-Israelis, the word "Nakba" represented a, "set of counter-histories about Israel's founding from which most have been systematically barred" (Stein 2010, 9).When the NGO Zochrot was founded in 2000, a google search in Hebrew for the term "Nakba" produced fewer than a dozen results, and most of those turned out to be references to the past-tense passive particle of the Hebrew verb "l'kaba" (Bronstein, interview 2013).

Yet by 2013, a similar online search yielded thousands of Hebrew-language results, including hundreds of digitalized maps, photos, and testimonials from Palestinian refugees (see Figure 5).

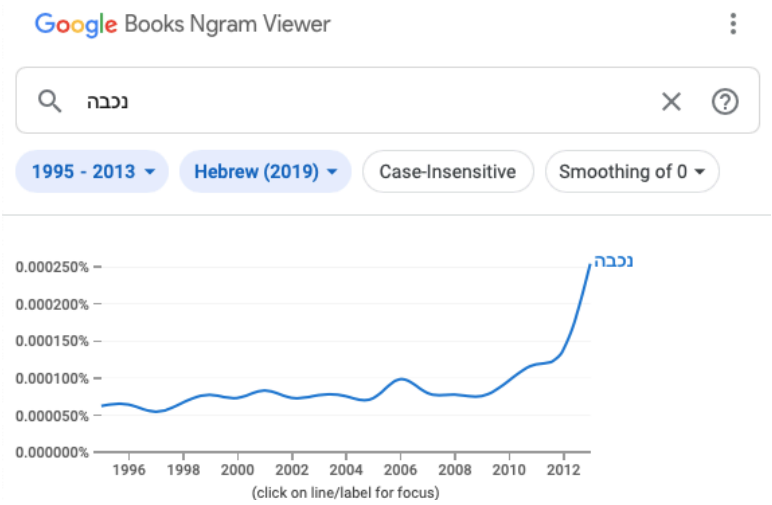

Figure 5 Google Ngram of "Nakba" Frequency in Published Books. Credit: Google/M. Ran-Rubin.

During this time period, visual images and representations of 1948, the Nakba, and Palestinian dispossession began appearing with increasing regularity in the Jewish-Israeli public sphere: from best-selling novels like *Homesick* (Nevo 2010) to feature-length films (Amos Gitai's *Kedma*, Udi Alon's *Forgiveness*) and a critically acclaimed "Nakba" episode in the second season of *Arab Labor* (2008).

As I describe in Chapter 3, it is no coincidence that the explosion of public memory about the Nakba among Jewish-Israelis overlaps with the rise of Nakba commemorations among Palestinian citizens of Israel. But the question of what this shifting landscape actually entails for those who inhabit, traverse, and interface with the doubled geography of historic Palestine and contemporary Israel is far from certain.

13. Coda: Learning to Undo the Architecture of Erasure

From the depopulation of Palestinian villages in 1948 to contemporary home demolitions in East Jerusalem and the growth of illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank, the "architecture of erasure" has played a critical role in molding the terrain of Israel-Palestine (Makdisi 2010a). In the next chapter, I look at how Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian activists work to unearth this buried history of material destruction by visiting depopulated Palestinian villages and marking ruins. In the process, I explore the ways in which activists learn to recognize the residual signs of the 1948 *Nakba* in the built environment, thereby transforming their orientation to both past and present experiences of displacement in Palestine.

Chapter 3: Seeing is Believing: The Sites and Sights of the *Nakba*

Early on during my fieldwork, I learned that the Israeli NGO, Zochrot, was organizing a tour of the destroyed Palestinian town of Yajur. But when the morning of the event arrived, an outbreak of torrential thunderstorms turned my short drive into a two-hour affair. By the time I made it to the meeting point, the tour was well underway. I called up the NGO's co-founder, Eitan Bronstein, and asked him if he could guide me towards their current location. "Sure," he replied, "just walk fifty meters up the hill north of the main parking lot, look for the cemetery, and that's where we will be."

Thinking that a village the size of Yajur would have had a relatively sizeable and well-marked graveyard, I was confident that I would be able to find it. But as I walked up the appointed spot, the only thing I perceived in front of me was an endless horizon of dense shrubbery and a few nondescript limestone rocks. Again, I called Eitan, who reassured me, "no, you're in the right place, can't you see the graves?" Exasperated by this response, I was on the verge of returning to the car. But just as I had begun retracing my steps, I heard a voice booming, "Over here! Come this way!" Turning around, I climbed uphill for a few more meters, finally joining up with the rest of the assembled group. Approaching them, I listened as one of the Yajur refugees took to the microphone to describe the scene before us, while demarcating it with a temporary memorial sign (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Temporary Signs Marking Yajur Cemetery. Credit: Michal Ran-Rubin.

Watching the scene, I expressed my surprise to Eitan that I had missed the plainly visible grouping of worn-down limestone discernible among the mossy green undergrowth (Figure 7). Turning to all, Eitan responded that in order to apprehend the material signs of destruction, all one had to do was, "look around and you'll see it."

And yet, had I come on my own, I almost certainly would have overlooked this important landmark. By contrast, for Eitan, this kind of geographical orientation to the "absent presence" of the Nakba as inscribed onto the modern Israeli landscape had become so habitual that he was hardly able to grasp the source of my dis-orientation. For him, this particular rock formation self-evidently signified the presence of a burial ground, simultaneously evincing a local history of destruction and indexing a broader narrative of Palestinian dispossession. He had clearly expected me to be able to see the presence of the Palestinian cemetery in front of us, to recognize it for what it was, and to be able to navigate towards it. But to my still under-socialized eyes,

these living embodiments of the past were indistinguishable amongst the jagged terrain.

Figure 7 Ruins in the Palestinian Cemetery of Yajur. Credit: Michal Ran-Rubin.

In this chapter, I explore the politics of ocular training, of learning how to see and what not to see. In contrast to writings that treat sight as an inborn sense, this chapter examines how vision is learned, contested, and mediated by state actors, political NGOs, Palestinian refugees, and Jewish-Israeli activists. While the sensorial and pedagogic exercises I describe are aimed at retraining the faculty of sight, I argue that what is at stake in this process is not simply the acquisition of new sensory capacities. Rather, "learning to see" also fundamentally entails recalibrating how individuals approach, recognize, and inhabit settler-colonial spaces.

In considering the visual strategies adopted by NGOs like Zochrot, their allies, as well as the many individuals who participate in their various tours, classes, actions, and public events, I suggest that we need to interrogate not only the optics of state power, but also the power of optics. How do individuals come to a space like the hillside of Yajur and, upon encountering the limestone jutting out from the soil, simultaneously recognize it as a Palestinian graveyard, a material index of the 1948 Nakba, and a cipher for ongoing state violence? That is, how do visual pedagogies inculcate individuals with the capacity to detect the traces of past and present violence latent in the construction of built environments in Palestine-Israel? And lastly, how does

this kind of "redistribution of the sensible" allow one not only to see differentially, but more so, to visualize an alternative geographic imaginary in Palestine-Israel (Rancière 2006)?

In order to understand how something so seemingly mundane as our eyesight can become a key site of political contestation, we must first situate Zochrot's ocular practices within a body of scholarship that critically interrogates the ways visuality is bound up with modern state power and its regimentation of particular "ways of seeing."

1. Seeing un/Like a State: mastering the optics of power in Palestine-Israel

In analyzing what is at stake in this construction of the Israeli state's hegemonic visuality, as well as in the way my informants attempt to forge alternative modes of seeing, it is helpful to distinguish between two related analytic terms: vision and visuality. Vision encompasses the physiological capacity to see through the human eye (Crary 1990). By contrast, visuality refers to the conditions of possibility for apperception: "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein" (Foster 1988, ix). The term thus gestures to how the gaze is directed, disciplined, and domesticated. As Hal Foster (1988) argues, visuality foregrounds the idea of "sight as a social fact." This chapter focus chiefly on the role of visuality, but also on how it scaffolds vision in ways that delimit and disclose what is seeable, and therefore knowable.

To understand how Eitan and the other activists from Zochrot learn to recognize a landscape of absence that has become entangled in the built environment, this chapter explores the ways in which "ways of seeing" can be calibrated within a community of practice. As a site of political pedagogy and collective training, vision: "depends upon the material configurations of places as well as the routine practices of teaching, learning, doubting, accepting,

confirming…what we see" (Laurier and Brown 2004, 3). But for activists in Israel-Palestine, learning to see anew is not an end in itself; rather, retraining sight is a precondition to other kinds of political mobilizations that assume a shared awareness of ongoing Nakba.

Along with exploring the ways vision can be socially trained, this chapter also seeks to understand how the faculty of sight is inextricably bound up with the machinations of political rule. I draw on the works of Timothy Mitchell (1991) and James Scott (1998), among others, to analyze the nexus of state power and optical experience. Scott, for example, links the rise of our dominant scopic regime to early modernist state schemes designed to "improve the human condition" (Scott 1998, 10). He charts how a range of visual, architectural, and cartographic practices rendered space legible to governance in new and unprecedented ways. From urban planners who sought to reorder "unruly" cities into a rational grid-system to surveyors who mapped ever greater swaths of territory, Scott demonstrates with finesse how these methods for visualizing reality intensified the state's administrative capability.

For our purposes, what is noteworthy here is the way these categories came to organize daily experience. Precisely because people are "embedded in state-created institutions that structure that experience," their capacities to perceive the world is enabled and constrained through its visual idioms (Scott 1998, 83). Visuality, in this context, is not a mere icon of power, but its very mode of operation.

In a related vein, Timothy Mitchell's (1991) classic text, *Colonising Egypt*, takes up the knotty relationship between visibility, representation, and colonialism as produced in state spaces. Mitchell narrates the experience of British rule in Egypt through the development of model villages, urban planning, modern schooling, and other quotidian projects of colonization and state-building. Like Scott, Mitchell (1991) explores how planners designed even the interior

spaces of the model home to open a window onto the life of the family, allowing domestic arrangements to be observed and patrolled from the outside. In this sense, Mitchell extends Scott's insights about the state's reliance on constructed visualities to the most intimate and private domains of individual life.

What both Mitchell and Scott reveal is the capacity of visuality to suture state power to the construction of built environments and render their association "natural." As we saw in the preceding chapter, this analysis sheds light on how many of the seemingly tangential architectural and planning projects associated with early settler-colonialism in Palestine worked in tandem to further the political goals of labor Zionism. Whether through the adoption of aggressive afforestation plans (Braverman 2009), the building of a rhizomatic road network connecting hundreds of rural settlement-colonies (Efrat 2004), or the construction of modular building typologies and top-down masterplans (Yacobi 2004), the Zionist aspiration to "redeem" the land drew as much on modern urban planning principles as it did on the pastoralist icon of agrarian development. Indeed, as a careful reading of Scott and Mitchell implies, the spatial logic of Zionist colonization incorporated both European aesthetic ideas about rational planning as well as British and French techniques of colonial rule-through-design developed elsewhere.

As invaluable as these scholarly accounts prove for elucidating the link between visuality and colonial rule, they neglect one critical aspect of ocular power that is central to this chapter: namely, how, and under what conditions, subjects acquire fluency in the visual idioms of the state. That is, through what means do citizens come to sense and make sense of the spaces they inhabit?[1] In the case of Palestine-Israel, for example, some individuals certainly can, and often

[1] A model for thinking about this type of question in a settler-colonial context can be found in *Revelation and Revolution, Vol. 2.* Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) offer a rich account for the often-fraught introduction of colonial architectural schemes in Southern Africa, as well as of the

do, ‘see like the state’’; à la Scott, they perceive in the managed forests of Israeli national parklands an indisputable sign of the state’s territorial mastery. But individuals are also equally capable of learning to “read” this exact same scene of afforestation as a visible reminder of the state’s desire to “bury the Nakba under the trees.” In other words, whether or not subjects apprehend a particular spatial formation as a material referent for state power (or alternatively, whether they see in it an omen of past and present violence) is not fully determined by state power alone. Rather, it crucially depends on the success or failure of the state’s scopic regime to discipline and scaffold the eye.

This is the point where I diverge from Mitchell’s and Scott’s accounts, which ultimately treat vision as a metaphor for power, rather than one of its key mediums. As a result, I suggest, they presuppose the existence of a perceiving subject who can properly decipher the apparent signs and implicit meanings of the state’s spatial order. To wit: Mitchell and Scott fallback on a trans-historical sensing individual who, in confronting a universe of external objects, effortlessly imbues them with meaning and significance through “the imbrication of the eye in the flesh of the world” (Jay 1993, 401). As a result, they end up “smuggling in” a phenomenological subject (Hirschkind 1991). While such an approach is capable of illuminating how visuality is socially organized, it does little to de-naturalize the conditions of sight itself.

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unexpected effects it had on the constitution of *Tswana* life worlds. As the Comaroffs remind us, the colonial aspiration to remake “habits and habitations,” was never so simple as the simple reorganization of social relation within a new “grid of gentility.” Rather, the local *Tswana* economy had to be torn apart and reconstructed from scratch. In the aftermath of these transformations, the missionaries employed Tswana labor in the physical construction of colonial structures, thereby seeking to “inculcate the idea that buildings, fabrications of enduring value, objectified human beings and their ‘works” (J. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1:299). But the result of these schemes to transform the hearts and minds of colonized populations through a reworking of built environments was always only partial and composite.

The problem with this kind of framework is that it "blinds" us to the imbrication of power embedded in perceptual experience – how we see, when we see, what our seeing cannot see. By contrast, in this chapter, I turn also to another Mitchell – that is, W. J. T. Mitchell – to examine how "ways of seeing" are enacted and contested within a community of practice (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002). W. J. T. Mitchell persuasively argues that any account of visuality, whether in Palestine-Israel or elsewhere, must "look at the strange things we do while looking, gazing, showing and showing off such as hiding, dissembling, and refusing to look" (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002, 178). In other words, we need to "show seeing," by putting the act of seeing centerstage.

This chapter takes up W. J. T. Mitchell's plea for analysts to produce a more nuanced account of "vernacular visualities," as well as their co-articulation within modern state formations (W. J. T. Mitchell 2005, 356). I examine both the Israeli state's ocular pedagogies and the effects of Zochrot's counter-scopic politics, by asking: what is entailed in learning to "see like a state," and conversely, what would the state like us to (not) see? That is, through what means are subjects taught to turn a blind eye – that is, to overlook, disregard, or otherwise exclude certain spaces, sites, or images from the "optical unconscious" (Benjamin 2008)? And how can this mode of seeing be challenged or undone?

Neither the people Zochrot encounters nor any of my other interlocutors ever approach the contested spaces of Palestine-Israel with untrained eyes. Rather, they arrive at the tours of destroyed Palestinian villages, at the Nakba study groups, as well as at the multiplicity of other sites and events, already socialized into seeing the world in particular ways. This is the problem to which I now turn.

2. Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Constructing Vernacular Visualities in Palestine-Israel

One afternoon in late June 2012, I met with a small group of Jewish-Israeli high school teachers who decided to form a study group to learn about the Nakba. As the educators were well-aware, this kind of extracurricular activity potentially violated the 2011 Nakba Law which banned official commemorations of the Nakba.[2] At minimum, the law requires that such activities take place in "an external and private framework, outside school premises," though teachers regularly expressed anxiety that even an informal meeting could become cause for termination (Israeli Ministry of Education 2011). And so, I asked the group what drew them to this topic.

After an uncomfortably pause in the conversation, one of the teachers, Mia, haltingly offered the following explanation:

> Mia: First, remember, I grew up in a time when we – I mean, other Jews my age and maybe some younger – we were constantly instructed in how to "know the land."
>
> Me: What did this involve, in practice I mean?
>
> Mia: you know, every weekend we went hiking, and we had to learn all the [Hebrew] place names and the history of different sites…I was in the scouts, too, and later I led tours for a few years. So, if you had asked me, even a few years ago, "do you 'know' this country?," I would have answered: "Yes!"
>
> Me: And today? What's changed?

[2] Amendment 40 to the Budget Foundations Law was approved on March 22, 2011. Article 4 of the law, which fines state-supported institutions that host activities during Independence Day, gave it its popular name "the Nakba Law (*Amendment No. 40 to the Budget Foundations Law 5771 ["Nakba Law"]* 2011).

> Mia: It's like, finding out that we've been conned *[rimu it'anu]*. All that stuff, the hikes, the forest trails, the stories we learned, maybe they were always just ways of concealing the truth. It's painful, but I guess this is what we're trying to figure out here.

At face value, this explanation for the teachers' urge to learn about the Nakba appeared relatively straightforward. Mia phrased her desire to learn about the Nakba as part of a broader endeavor to undo the visual trainings – in her words, the "conning" (and perhaps also the cunning) of the state – which she experienced as a child. The kinds of walking trips [*tiyulim*] that Mia and the other educators ambivalently recall from their youth certainly did unfold on the well-paved terrain of official state hiking paths that inculcated a nationalist mode of sightseeing (R. L. Stein 2008). In this context, the hike became a technique for joining visual and political sensibilities through a corporeal experience with the land (Abu El-Haj 2001). As another one of the teachers aptly phrased it, we "conquered [the land] with our feet." And at some level, this formative practice clearly had its desired effect, as evinced in the teachers' testimonial of a childhood spent honing feelings of spatial mastery over territory.

At the same time, the *tiyul* did more than simply foster a somatic knowledge of Zionist spatial ordering; it also instilled an optical framework for apprehending sites, objects, and landscapes as inexorably Jewish.[3] Hence, when I asked if the narratives associated with different sites along the routes were necessarily Zionist, Mia responded: "Of course, they had to be. This is what it meant to 'know the land,' to know it as Jewish." In these recollections, the practice of spending a childhood trekking and hiking through national parklands provides a material referent

[3] As Nadia Abu El Haj (2001, 47; 57) and others have shown, the hike foregrounded the putatively Jewish and Biblical past of sites, relics, and found objects.

for imbuing historical narrations with the affect of political belonging (see also Anderson 1991; Nora 1996).

As was evident in this account, honing a definably Jewish-Israeli grammar of seeing requires constantly coordinating spaces with bodily, affective, and textual inscriptions. This is most palpable in the state's semiotic framing of sites and sight. From the use of hiking maps that render the territory legible, to encounters with signposts along the routes that direct the hiker's gaze, and the imprinting of official state histories on site-specific placards, Israel's construction of visuality entails classifying, labeling, and tagging topographic features as markers of an unbroken Jewish past, present, and future in historic Palestine.

By encoding textual and visual cues into the construction of "natural landscapes," the state helps guide individuals to see (or not see) certain aspects of the terrain upon which they amble. What one "sees," and how one, to quote Mia, "knows the land," is therefore knotted up with the framing and categorization of striated spaces. The Israeli state's regimentation of built environments and ordinary landscapes provides an object lesson in nationalist sightseeing for individuals, like Mia, who have learned to "see the signs."

So far, this account of the construction of vernacular visualities in Palestine-Israel seems to reiterate the earlier narratives we encountered of the "optics of power," articulated by Scott and Mitchell, inter alios. Like Scott and Mitchell, we see a great deal of attention to the state's management, ordering, and regulation of space.

However, Mia's recounting points to a critical feature of state visuality that is mostly missed in these previous renditions, namely: the simultaneous concern with fashioning a certain kind of ocular sensibility. As she made clear, inculcating subjects with the veridical vision of the state relied on an active process of schooling sight. Whether through the informal transmission of

Hebrew-names and place mythologies narrated to Jewish-Israeli youth on hikes, the formal training in nationalist geography mandated for every Israeli student, or the many weekends spent "conquering with their feet," the goal of these activities was always to discipline the eye and instill a uniquely Jewish-Israeli lens through which the world could be apprehended. In so far as the *tiyul* didactically teaches the Jewish-Israeli hiker how to "read" the landscape, then, it does so not simply through its management of forests and trails, but also by honing their visual aptitude for translating material sites and objects as indices of national identity. Here, we see the extent to which the Israeli state does not take for granted the formation of perceiving individuals; instead, it carefully curates and primes citizens' ocular awareness.

Learned visual idioms work as much through what one overlooks as what one sees. For this reason, the success of the *tiyul* in defining the perceptual borders of Jewish-Israeli sight depends on its ability to shield the optical unconscious from visual intrusions. As one of the educators that day put it: "even if you come across a remnant, nothing refers to it, there are no signposts, so you ignore it." From the perspective of the NGO (Zochrot), the absence of commemoration for razed Palestinian villages is likewise understood to ensure that knowledge of both "their existence in the past and their destruction" is repressed. Mia and the other teachers concurred with this assessment, situating their desire to learn about the Nakba as a response to a context where the violence of 1948 and beyond had ostensibly been concealed.

Significantly, I heard this theme reiterated in many conversations with Jewish-Israeli interlocutors, who often insisted that Palestine had been successfully pushed "out of sight, out of mind." The visual evidence of the Nakba, they argued, had been hidden – either as a result of demolition, afforestation, or repurposing structures. This, in turn, rendered the ongoing forms of violence invisible to most Jewish-Israelis, making it impossible to grapple with its continued

manifestation in the construction of everyday spaces in Palestine-Israel. For the teachers, such practices amounted to a cover-up of the Nakba, a method for expunging Palestine from view.

However, this is only half the story. For one, in contrast to the teachers' narratives of the complete erasure of the signs of pre-Nakba Palestinian life, Noga Kadman's (2015) remarkable thesis on nationalist hikes documents the multiple ways these shards from the past crucially partake in the experience of Jewish-Israeli perceiving subjects. In part, she argues, this is reflected in the incorporation of ruinous spaces into a mythologizing landscape. In encounters with Palestinian artifacts, sites, and remains, for example, their provenance is often simply reclassified. Ayelet, another participant in the teachers' study group, provided me with some sense of how this process of reclassification worked in practice. Reflecting on her experience growing up in a small town north of Haifa, where dozens of visible Palestinian sites and structures routinely went unrecognized despite their ubiquity, she described how:

> Not far from the house where I was raised, there was this beautiful spring [from the Palestinian village of Qula]. As a kid, I remember we played near it all the time. So, one day, I asked my father where it came from. He didn't hesitate before telling me it was from the Roman period. And that's how it always was whenever we'd come across ruins [*sradim*[4]]. But what's really hard for me is that my father knew. I mean, he had to know, because he was there before '48. But for some reason, no one, not even him, no one ever wanted to admit that it belonged to a Palestinian village.

[4] The term that Lior invokes – *sradim* – conjures slightly different associations than the one used by Kadman [*khirbah*]. More so, *sradim* carries conations absent from any possible translation. While it is used to describe the remnants of destroyed sites, it also implies the continued *survival* of objects. The noun *sradim* is derived from the verb *l'sa'red* – to survive, to exist, to remain. Hence, common Hebrew usage would describe a survivor of the Holocaust as "*sared sho'ah.*"

In the introduction to her book, Kadman (2015) echoes a similar sense of "blind sight" in the face of Palestinian ruins. Recollecting her own childhood trips to the 'emptied' Palestinian village of Lifta, which lies on the outskirts of Jerusalem, she writes: "the visits left me with the vague impression that it [Lifta] was ancient, a ruin [*khirbah*] that has always been like this – desolated, slightly mysterious, beautiful and in some way intimidating, with its silence and the narrow paths winding among the heavy-set houses and walls" (Kadman 2015, 3). Lior, a Zochrot activist, described an almost identical memory of the way Lifta entered into her perceptual reckoning: "I thought it was so romantic. The ruins looked like they were frozen in time." Here, it is precisely the visual incorporation (and mythologizing) of the Nakba's physical vestiges that made it possible to divorce the landscape from its Palestinian provenance. In so doing, they also neutralize evidence of Palestinian history that those objects might index.

As I was constantly alerted to during my fieldwork, this ability to apprehend spatial violence – including, not only in the current forms Palestine-Israel's built reality, but also in the present-absences embodied in ruins – is delimited by a prior "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 2013). While a number of my Jewish-Israelis interlocutors, including Mia and most of the teachers in the study group, insisted on the categorical invisibility of the Nakba, the same could not be said for any of the Palestinian refugees or activists with whom I also worked. They argued, by contrast, that the catastrophe of 1948 left a tangible imprint on every square inch of historic Palestine, and that even today, those referents remain visible on street corners, empty lots, old houses, and a myriad of other observable sites.

Visuality, in this context, is anything but a neutral technology of sight. Rather, it is the very modality through which the state's authority is registered in built forms, the education of the senses, and the organization of spatial life. Notably, this critical aspect of how the state

constructs "vernacular visualities" is largely overlooked in the accounts we saw earlier of the "optics of power," as expressed in the writings of Scott and Mitchell. As their approach only attends to the expression of state power in external symbols, built environments, and the management of the home, they end up relying on an "*a priori* subject who, through the act of perception, acquires his specific historical formation" (Hirschkind 1991, 294). But in so far as this regimentation of the sensorium allows one to see and hear some things while routinely occluding others, it also points to the possibility of a counter-scopic politics that interrupts the distribution of the sensible. Hence, Mia and her fellow instructors were able to overturn the state's visual narrative through an active process of retraining sight.

For activists in Israel-Palestine, the struggle to destabilize received "cartographies of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible," represents an ongoing process that takes place in multiple sites: classrooms, village tours, online, and in the family home (Rancière 2010). It is to the emergence of these local forms of counter-visuality, and their concomitant efforts at retraining the eye, that I now turn.

3. Foregrounding the Palestinian Nakba: a Counter-Scopic Politics

In early 2012, as part of the opening of his new exhibit, "Common Archives," the Israeli director Eyal Sivan offered to lead a discussion of visual and cinematic representations of the Nakba with a small group of educators, some of who had previously expressed interest in using his documentary works in their classrooms. The movie he chose to screen that day was *Kedma* (Gitai 2002). While I hadn't yet seen it, I recognized the title as one of the most popular of a recent wave of Israeli "Nakba cinema" that, together with Zochrot's actions, transformed the

once silenced subject to one of the most controversial and hotly debated topics in newspapers, nightly news programs, and the halls of Knesset.

Like many of the recent Hebrew-language productions about the Nakba, *Kedma* juxtaposes the narratives of Palestinian refugees with the story of Holocaust survivors. Despite my skepticism of attempts to tether representations of the Nakba and the Holocaust, I had read numerous critical reviews hailing it as a "brave" attempt by a prominent Jewish-Israeli director to depict the dispossession of Palestinians in 1948.[5] Unfolding during the ten-day assault on the village of Latrun in 1948, the camera alternates between the perspectives of Jewish Holocaust survivors-cum-Palmach fighters, who are drafted to fight a war in Palestine that they ostensibly "never asked for," and the voice of fleeing Palestinians, who declare: "We will remain here in spite of you. Like a wall." Indeed, the film appears to give voice to the trauma of al-Nakba, as in the concluding scene's overwrought depiction of a bereaved Palestinian woman aiding a group of waylaid Fellahin. I assume, therefore, that this is the reason Eyal chose it.

Upon arriving, I saw that Eyal was already greeting the nine assembled teachers. While he promised a "tour-de-force experience," he also appeared determined to provide as little framing as possible before the screening. Instead, he instructed the group to keep track of "what we saw," recording our impressions in small notebooks. This was the one and only point Eyal emphasized: "you have to really look, and make sure to take notes on what you actually observed," he insisted.

[5] The evidence that reviewers' gave for this claim is that whereas most films produced by Jewish Israeli directors struggle to visually represent the land prior 1948 – usually pivoting either to a landscape of barren wasteland or else depicting empty desert scenes – *Kedma* portrays a vibrant Palestinian village before 1948.

We watched the almost three-hour long movie in near total silence, the hush only punctured by the sound of pens scratching away as the group dutifully recorded their immediate impressions. When the credits rolled, Eyal turned to ask: "well, what did you see?"

After an awkward pause generated by the unusual question, one middle-aged teacher, Tamara, tentatively suggested that the film felt like a rejoinder to early Zionist cinema, such as Otto Preminger's Exodus, with the final scene reproducing Preminger's ending shot-for-shot. "Maybe," Eyal retorted, "but what was actually perceptible as you were watching?" He had not asked them what they thought of the film, he pointed out, but what they saw in it. Another teacher tried to answer the deceptively simple question, remarking that she too had noted the director's use of lightness and darkness: "the battle over Latrun takes place almost entirely at night. It seemed almost symbolic. We hide the violence under the cover of darkness."

Shaking his head, Eyal plaintively exclaimed: "you all have failed the exercise."

Noting the group's confusion, the director suggested we needed to re-watch parts of *Kedma* together. This time, however, he urged us not to look for "hidden meanings," and instead "pay attention to what is or is not visible." During our second screening of the evening, Eyal made sure to pause after almost every scene in order to elucidate the images unfolding on screen. "Let's start with the opening act. Notice anything strange?" he asked. "Really pay attention to how Latrun, a once vibrant Palestinian community, is depicted. Look at the terraces lining the village." Do you see it now?

Almost simultaneously, two teachers gasped: "they're a wreck! They're destroyed!"

"Yes, exactly," Eyal noted approvingly, with the satisfaction of an educator finally discerning the dawning of comprehension. *Kedma*, although ostensibly staged in a pre-48 Palestinian village, was filmed entirely in present-day Latrun – a town largely demolished after

the war. Within this visual field, Latrun's terraces were shattered, unkempt, and disfigured. If we looked further, Eyal suggested, we'd notice that the trees in the scenery were also all barren, and the remaining structures and houses were in a derelict state. All this before a single shot in the film's climactic battle was fired.

Begrudgingly, Eyal conceded, it was a brilliant cinematic move. Here, we had a movie that claims to represent "Palestinian refugees mourning for a lost homeland. But what kind of homeland is this?" As he pointed out, all of the visual cues—broken terraces, dilapidated residences, and a barren [*churva*] landscape—imply: "what have they really lost?" And that, he concluded, is what made the production so ingenious: "it claims to recognize the Nakba, but in reality, it acknowledges nothing." Instead, *Kedma* visually projects images of life in pre-48 Palestine onto an erstwhile backdrop of ruin. And so, "if the land was always already desolate," a village in perpetual ruination, "then al-Nakba could not have been the cause of its destruction." Thus, the film so highly praised for bringing the Nakba to an Israeli film going public's eyes, he surmised, itself occludes the very thing it seeks to expose.

Eyal let his words sink in for several minutes. The room confessed to feeling disturbed by how much was overlooked in the first viewing. At last, Tamara offered up another reflection: "I never would have given the terraces a second thought if you hadn't called attention to them," she told him. A second teacher chimed in: "Me too. I didn't think to take stock of the setting… I imagined that you wanted us to search for the film's hidden meanings or something."

Reassuringly, Eyal reaffirmed to the group that they were hardly the first in history to have looked past something so blatant. "Viewers do this all the time, both in the cinema and in our everyday encounters with Palestinian landscapes," he reflected. "Think again about the question of lightness and darkness in the staging of the film. Could it be symbolic of a larger

narrative arch," Eyal asked? "Perhaps. Or Maybe Gitai [the director] just liked the aesthetics of shooting against the sunset." That is all speculative. "But the shorn terraces, the worn-out domiciles, and the dying trees are indisputably there." They are not "mere background," or extraneous details cobbled together. Rather, they enframe the entire scene. In fact, he proclaimed, the "backdrop" does not just structure the film's narrative; it is the visual language through which it speaks and becomes intelligible.

"The framing is not neutral," Eyal's concluded. To illustrate this last point, he took a piece of paper, folded it four ways, and then cut out a square in the middle. Opening up the paper-frame, he placed it over his face, and asked us to describe what we saw. Having grown wise to the facilitator's tricks, the room correctly answered in unison: "a nose." Next, he turned to a small print on the wall, depicting Refugees, a watercolor painting by the Palestinian artists, Ibrahim Hijazi. With the precision of a director's eye, Eyal moved the cut-out frame directly over the painting's silhouetted figures receding into the horizon line. His makeshift prop blurred out the refugees, so that all that remained in view was a series of unmarked stone buildings scattered across a collection of foci on the canvas. Again, he inquired: "what do you see?"

We were struck by the image's radical transformation. Our eyes narrowed on the redefined focal point, which conjured what now looked like nothing more than an innocuous Mediterranean landscape. By redirecting our gaze to the background scenery, Eyal's improvised mount effectively pushed the main subject of Hijazi's painting – the refugees – to the edge of sight. Notably, the frame did not render the refugees invisible – that is, it was not actually positioned atop of the human figures – but it did orient the viewer away from them. "The enclosure defines the foreground," Eyal explained, creating "the very image it is meant to encircle."

This exercise, of course, was not just about the visual medium of film; rather, it was also metonymic of the state's visuality. Thinking back to my first meeting with Mia and the other group of teachers I had met in the informal study group, I recalled their insistence that Palestine had been pushed "out of sight, out of mind." Mia, for instance, repeatedly told me that her childhood hikes had carved out a path through a singularly Jewish landscape, thereby shielding her from any unwarranted encounters with the detritus of the Nakba (see Figure 8).

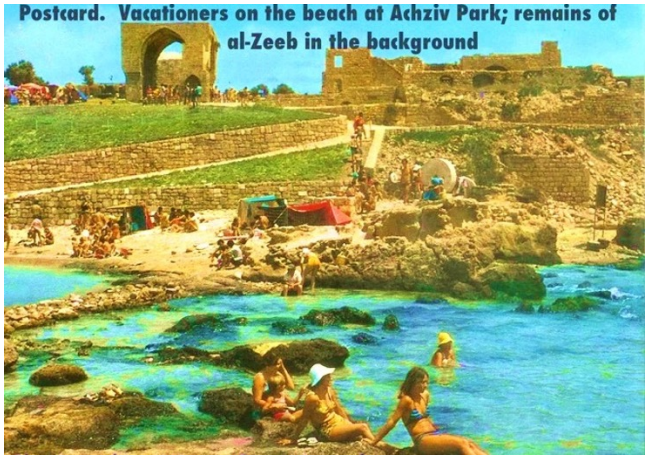


Figure 8 Palestinian ruins featured in the background of Israeli postcard

But Eyal's pedagogic intervention aimed to unsettle this narration by pointing to how the signs of the Nakba could be hidden in plain sight, like a purloined letter. As in Gitai's cinematography, the Israeli state enframed space, zooming-in on sites and structure that became enfolded into a Zionist perceptual schema. The state's attention to landscaping space, according to Eyal, enabled Jewish-Israelis to push vestiges of the Nakba further and further into the horizon. Here, as in Gitai's inclusion of the terraces of Latrun, the ruins of Palestine become the unremarked setting upon which an exclusively Jewish-Israeli spatial practice unfurls.

"Now, can you appreciate why I don't want you only focusing on the foreground," he inquired? "Do you see how, in doing so, we discount the network of associations inscribed in the

backdrop, enframing the scene? Do you get how this 'backgrounding' of perceptual information ends up obscuring things in plain view?"

Finally, he concluded, "if *Kedma* appears to tell us nothing new, it is because we are not yet trained to see it for what it is." Likewise, if the Nakba appears to be, paradoxically, both omnipresent and invisible in our surroundings, "it is because we have yet to learn how to read the landscape through a non-Zionist lens."

Echoing the necessity to "learn to see" anew, at the site of the screening, it was Eyal's pedagogic intercession which became the occasioning for visual recognition. As Tamara implied in our discussion of *Kedma*: "I never would have given the terraces a second thought if you [the instructor] hadn't called attention to them."

To get us to this moment, Eyal made use of a number of ancillary methods. First, before the showing even began, he honed an ethic of visual attentiveness by requiring that the attendees take notes and record impressions of the film as we watch. At the same time, he signaled that something might be "off," asking us to pay heed to anything "strange" in the representation of Latrun.

Second, at critical moments, he cued the eye, kinesthetically gesturing towards the screen and drawing our eyes to particular features on display. When it became clear that this alone would not be sufficient for unraveling *Kedma's* depiction of historic Palestine, Eyal re-played several key scenes. This time, however, he wove his elucidative commentary into the experience of viewing discrete shots. By annotating and "chunking up" the movie, he was able to enact for us a dissection of the film's visual motifs. Like medical students who learn the art of detecting signs of bodily affliction by observing a pathologist performing an autopsy, the group honed a capacity to decode the traces of violence imbricate in the landscape by watching Eyal's

postmortem of the film. At last, as we re-watched the opening act of *Kedma*, we finally saw what was there all along: the razed terraces, the forsaken terrain, the castoff buildings – in other words, the vision of Palestine that lies at the core of Zionism's scopic regime.

What was required to inhabit a different visual field, then, was nothing short of a radical re-education of the senses. Reorienting one's visual capacities is not a matter of simply searching out for shrouded signs of the Nakba. Reiterating what Eitan had said to me months earlier in Yajur, Eyal claimed: "it's all out in the open. Just look around." In the case of the film, this meant grasping how the director's inclusion of the fragmented terraces and abandoned houses subtly naturalized the (Zionist) vision of historic Palestine as an empty, barren, and decimated wasteland. As we shall see in the next section, in the course of more routine and day-to-day activities, this would entail something more: looking at what's there, what's already present, in the built environment, and cultivating the ability to see it as part of a quotidian geography of violence and dispossession.

4. Seeing Through Walls: Studying the Sights and Sites of the Nakba

Having experienced Zochrot's trainings for pedagogues, I wanted to see how they taught everyday Israelis to recognize the signs of the Nakba in their milieu. And so about a month after Eyal's lesson in framing, I traveled to a south-Tel Aviv neighborhood for the first of a three-month long public seminar, cheekily entitled "How Do We Say Nakba in Hebrew?"[6]

[6] The word Nakba literally translates as catastrophe [heb: *ason*]. But because of the powerful semiotic connotations of *Nakba* in both Arabic and, when used as a proper noun to refer to the expulsion of roughly one million Palestinians from their homes between 1947-1949, in Hebrew as well, the term is untranslatable. The title of the class thus playfully mocks the taboo amongst Jewish Israelis, for whom Hebrew is their primary language. At the same time, it points to a sense in which the term is *unintelligible*, perhaps even *untranslatable* for a Jewish-Israeli public.

Introducing myself to the twenty-odd participants scattered across on chairs, cushions, and makeshift seats, I was a little surprised by the diversity in the room. This was not the homogenous cluster of so-called "Tel Aviv liberals," frequently stereotyped as elite, secular, and Ashkenazi, that friends had told me to expect. From the 20-year-old Jaffa based artist to the retired school principal from a poor development-town of Petah Tikva, this classroom was easily one of those most heterogeneous spaces I had encountered within the Green Line. But the group also seemed somewhat hesitant about being here. Noa, our resident artist, admitted, "I wasn't sure till the last minute if I would make it. I am a little nervous being here. But, in the end, living in Jaffa now, I felt I had to do this." Other participants acknowledged a similar comingling of anticipation and apprehension.

The course was co-led by two amiable instructors, Ami and Moran. Sensing trepidation in the room, they started with what seemed to be an uncharacteristically simple exercise. Dividing us into pairs, they handed out ten stock photos of easily recognizable structures, including such iconic buildings as the Etzel Museum, Tel Aviv University, and the Hilton Hotel on the Tel Aviv beachfront. We received our first assignment: with your partner, identify the site displayed in the image. Go and visit it, record what you know about the edifice, and come prepared to report back to the group. The room heaved a sigh of relief, but I also detected a few barely suppressed eye-rolls. The ten prints we had before us represented some of the most well-known sites in Israel. What was the point in talking about such landmark structures when we were supposed to be learning about the subterranean legacies of the Nakba?

The next session, the student duos began their presentations on the assigned images. The first pair held up a photo of the Hilton Hotel. They began by describing its prominent location on the promenade, and then offered a smattering of facts gleaned from the concierge: the oversized

structure was built on a 17,000 square meter site; its brutalist façade, designed by the prize-winning architectural firm of Yaakov Rechter, was so influential that it spawned dozens of copycats; and it remains one of the largest and most iconic buildings in the city. “Did you learn anything else about the history of the site,” the instructors quizzed them? Flipping through a notebook, they responded: “Yes, we discovered that, in the 1950s, it was used as an air force missile base, Yona Camp.” And before then? “Did nothing unusual stand out, either in the photo or when they visited the hotel grounds?” The students appeared confused.

One of the instructors, Ami, walked over to them, putting his finger on the bottom-right edge of the image, and asking: “what do you see here?” The students passed the picture around the room. It took a few minutes, but eventually they made out the blurred outlines of gravestones just barely discernible in front of the imposing hotel wall.

One of the students in the back of the room shook his head. “No, this simply cannot be,” he proclaimed – “I’ve walked by the Hilton beach hundreds of times, maybe more, and I never saw a burial ground anywhere near there” (see Figure 9).

“The image is not photoshopped,” Ami assured him. “You’re looking at the remains of the Al-Nabi cemetery. It is there, plainly visible to the naked eye.” If you go back tomorrow, he suggested, “not only will you be able to see the headstones; you won’t be able to unsee them.”

Figure 9 Hilton Hotel / Al-Nabi Cemetery. Credit: Michal Ran-Rubin.

From there, we proceeded in a similar catechistic fashion through the rest of the presentations. The instructors revealed that the famous shot of Tel Aviv University encompasses one of the few surviving structures from the village of Sheikh Muwannis. The Etzel Museum, which stands on the destroyed grounds of Manshiya, was likewise identified as a former Palestinian home. And so on.

The exercise slowly disarranged a familiar topography of sites and spaces, suspending the students' conviction in received ocular truths. The goal of the pedagogical intervention was to make the students reconsider their visual aptitude for reckoning with the Israeli built environment. It did so, in part, by showing how the underlying fascia of Tel-Aviv's cityscape had been wrought through the violence enacted during the Nakba.

The instructors grasped the significance of this moment; everything else would depend on whether students could be trained to see the unseen. "It would be one thing," Ami explained, "if we wanted them to decipher signs of the Nakba in places like Jaffa or Akko," that is, in cities linked to extant Palestinian communities within the 1948 borders of Israel. "But that's not what we're trying to accomplish; we need them to recognize that it inheres here," in front of us, "in the heart of Tel Aviv." The Nakba is not outside of the times and spaces we inhabit – it is not some event that took place "back then" or "over there." Rather, Ami insisted: "It is internal to us." It is present in every sense of the word: it "exists in the present-day, not just as an event in past-time, and likewise, it is physically present in the very spaces we reside in." The students, therefore, needed to "grasp the Nakba as part of their lived reality." All this hinges, Ami conceded, on their ability to apperceive anew.

5. Image-Worlds of the Nakba: Confronting the Nakba's Optical Unconscious

It is no coincidence that, in the first instance, the instructors of the Nakba class, like Eyal Sivan before them, turned to film and photography to dis-embed their interlocutors from an inherited mode of seeing. In his 1931 essay, "A Little History of Photography," Walter Benjamin seizes on the medium's capacity to "reveal things not normally seen." The camera for him is a visual prosthetic. With "all of its resources for swooping and risings, stretching or compressing a sequence, enlarging or reducing an object," the snapshot encapsulates a world that otherwise lies outside the "normal spectrum of sense impressions" (Benjamin 2008, 37). Like the microscope and the telescope, this mode of photographic scrutiny brought into view particles once unobserved by the human eye.

While the print therefore zooms-in and magnifies previously undetected aspects of reality, it also does much more. Because the camera's lens is unselective, it captures in a single shot both what is "enduring and contingent," melding "foreground and background," and proceeds to present "each detail without discrimination."

In this sense, while the camera does work as a prosthetic device, it does not do so through a simple augmentation of vision. Rather, by capturing elements overlooked in the mind's eye, the photograph shows us things that, "we would have preferred not to see, or don't want to see, don't know how to see, or don't know how to acknowledge seeing" (Elkins 2011, 98). As such, it contains within it the seeds of a counter-visuality.

For this reason, we find that contemplating image-worlds can be an altogether distressing experience. The portraits received by the students, for example, are immediately recognizable as familiar parts of their cityscape, representing landmarks casually encountered on a near-daily

basis. But they also splice in an alien, if no less ubiquitous, topography of violence. By interrupting their routine associations of everyday spaces, the photograph retains a capacity to shock, to surprise, and even to scandalize the viewer. In so doing, these images are capable of unraveling the very subject who is constituted, in part, through such visual practices.

For Zochrot, the didactic potential of the photograph was bound to this ability to "undermine confidence in the authority of the eyes." Yes, the camera enlarges the depth and horizon of vision. But it also showcases the material limits of sight. By enabling one to see more, it simultaneously demonstrates "how little is ordinarily visible, giving one the unnerving sense of living in a world only partially perceived" (S. M. Smith 2013, 6). As in Benjamin's account, the optical unconscious is not simply regarded as the act of disclosing an unseen reality, but the force of reckoning with its erstwhile invisibility. Hence the reason why revealing the visible traces of the Nakba in these photographs is so disturbing for these students.

In the classroom, instructors played with these different dimensions of image-worlds, at once using them to extend sight to places like the al-Nabi cemetery, while at the same time gesturing to the fact that "when we see, we are unconscious of what our seeing cannot see" (Cadava 1998, 97). Here, the promise of photography was two-fold: not only could it uncover an underlying topography of state violence; it was also able to disrupt the naturalness of sight. As a form of representation, the medium had the perplexing capacity to "not only to resemble the world it depicts but also to render it strange, to destroy habitual fictions of self-identity and familiarity" (Hansen and Kracauer 1997, xxv). This moment of shock and realization came as a student cried out from the back of the room, "No, this simply cannot be," telling us that he had walked by the site "hundreds of times, maybe more," and never "never saw a burial ground."

But the point of the exercise went beyond the Hilton, the promenade, or even the remains of Al-Nabi. The objective was to de-familiarize an entire mental landscape that had been forged in the belly of the optical unconscious. This was the condition of possibility for the project of re-educating the senses of Jewish-Israelis; as Ami put it, "everything else depends on whether students can see the unseen." In the end, photography's pedagogic value rested on whether or not students could walk away questioning the validity of their visual consciousness.

Although these initial sessions of the Nakba seminar set up a confrontation with the optical unconscious, they did not yet offer the students much in the way of new visual skills for apprehending how various non-iconic, even quotidian, structures might equally evince residual markers of 1948 and beyond. On the one hand, some topographic blind spots, such as the Al-Nabi cemetery lurking at the edge of the Hilton Hotel, were brought starkly into visibility. But, on the other hand, students were no more capable of deciphering the presence of ongoing Nakba latent in the construction of ordinary spaces within Palestine-Israel than they had been before. In order to grapple with the traces of violence nestled into byroads and flats or residing at the interstices of urban life – in places like former Manshiya, which still persists as a kind of no-man's land skirting between Jaffa and Tel Aviv – something more was required: the ability to visualize the presence of absence in everyday sites and unmarked locales. This entailed not only mastery of a learned skill, but also engendering the condition of possibility for inhabiting and imagining new spatial relations.

6. Walking Through Walls: Visualizing the Present-Absence in Nakba Tours

> It is no surprise that I can see the destroyed neighborhoods and houses; I hear the ghosts, I travel with them through streets which are no longer there, I know their stories by heart. And so, I see

> the scar as if it was an open wound. I see the absence; I feel it deeply and most of all in those urban scars. – Yair Wallach, 2010

While in the middle of the course, and only a few months following my initial trip to Yajur, I arranged once more to meet up with a group of Palestinian refugees, Jewish Israel activists, and about twenty current residents from the city of Lod/Lydda.[7]

We agreed to meet early in the morning in order to be able to walk through the interior of the city, visualizing the site-specific history of the Nakba woven into Lod's material layout, before the worst of the mid-day heat. As I would quickly realize, however, traversing the urban built environment entailed a different set of ocular skills than the ones honed in the photography exercise. There, instructors used images of familiar places to showcase what was routinely occluded in the optical unconscious, simultaneously disclosing the fallibility of Jewish-Israeli sight and the erasure of Palestinian sites. The effectiveness of the exercise was, in part, indebted to its referential materiality. Hence, Ami was able to counter the disbelieving response of at least one wary student by emphasizing: it is not photoshopped. The picture depicted a real, existing reality; it represented a visible form of violence that, although rendered invisible, was nonetheless physically present. You could go and view it for yourself, he charged.

But the referential and indexical specificity of the photographic medium is also its greatest limitation. While it shows us what is there, capturing details that the mind's eye has failed to grasp, it does not show us what is not there. Even as the camera's lens "renders the perspective of no one, and thus makes clear the absence of a (perceiving) subject," it struggles to

[7] Many towns were given Hebraized names following the expulsion of their residents and the establishment of the State of Israel (Benvenisti 2000). Hence, the Palestinian municipality of Lydda, still referred to as such by its Palestinian residents, became the Israeli city of Lod (see Chapters 2 and 4).

bear witness to the subject of absence. But in the case of Palestine-Israel, learning to visualize the afterlife of the Nakba in the formation of everyday spaces also requires developing the ability to see the presence of an absence; that is, cultivating the capacity to apprehend ruins as a dematerialized index of what used to be there, of who used to live here, and of the kind of violence that transformed this site into a non-place, a specter of its former self.

Nowhere was this truer than in the town of Lod/Lyyda. The story of the Nakba in Lydda is particularly harrowing, and perhaps for this reason until recently remained one of the most suppressed episodes from 1948. In the middle of a heat wave in July of that year, Zionist forces cut Lydda off from access to food, while orchestrating a large-scale bombing campaign of the city's interior. On the second day of fighting, Palmach fighter Yerachmiel Kahanovich launched the attack against the large, centrally located Dahmash Mosque, where over 200 Palestinians had sought shelter. He hurled a phiat-type shell (typically an anti-tank weapon) through the window of the mosque, instantly killing almost all of the women and children huddled inside. When it was clear that none survived, Zionist militants approached a group of young Palestinian detainees and asked for "volunteers" to inter the scorched remains. Seven boys agreed to undertake the gruesome task. As soon as the ground was prepared, the same Zionist soldiers who recruited the boy hours earlier turned around and shot them at point-blank range. Their corpses were thrown into the mass grave they had just finished digging.

Today, a parking lot stands on the site where the victims of the mosque massacre, as well as the seven executed men, are still buried. Their bodies have never been exhumed, no plaque mentions their names, and no sign or monument has been erected on the site. Adding to the injury, the Israeli state renamed the street bordering the mass grave: Tzahal (IDF) Avenue, in homage to the current Israeli state army (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Tzahal Ave (Lod, 2012). Credit: Michal Ran-Rubin.

Reflecting on these kinds of unmarked spaces, the Israeli geographer Yair Wallach (2010) described the slipperiness of perceptual reckoning for Jewish-Israelis. "What for me seems evident," he states, "is invisible for others. Where I see trauma, others see nothing; just an empty parking lot, just another urban wasteland."

By contrast, for the Palestinian refugees and residents of Lod, the mass grave buried beneath the car park was never far from view. Approaching the site, an elderly woman reached out for my hand, steadying herself as we move closer. Faintly, I heard her ask: "was it not enough that the Zionist killed them? No. It was not enough." She elaborated: "they had to make sure we knew they had won. So now, every time I come here, wanting to remember, I have to walk on a road named for their killers." Her son, who had been accompanying us on the tour, nodded knowingly in agreement.

For many of the Palestinian refugees and displaced families who had joined the group that morning, approaching the mosque and the adjacent lot was a fraught and unsettling moment. The climax was when Umar, the Zochrot organizer who led our walk, asked one of the refugees to help nail in a handmade sign with the words: "Mass grave: for victims of the July 1948

massacre in al-Lydd." Here, the tour made present the absent bodies, unearthing a violent past from within the seemingly innocuous site (see Figure 11).

Figure 11 Refugees Commemorating Unmarked Mass Grave in Al-Lydd/Lod. Credit: M. Ran-Rubin.

Bringing to the fore the presence of absent spaces, unmarked graves, and imperceptible violence can inevitably be jarring for passerby who are not used to seeing their habitual landscapes reordered in this way. This point became especially evident to me that morning, when I noticed that the renaming of the cemetery – which had brought tears to many of the Palestinian participants – also seemed to have disturbed and visibly shocked one of the Jewish Israelis who accompanied the group. An elderly woman, whom I had been chatting amiably with throughout the afternoon, explained that she moved to Lod in the early 1960s, and had appeared willing to listen to the stories being narrated about the Nakba's unfolding in the town she had called home for the past five decades. But at the massacre site, her otherwise open demeanor changed considerably – she crossed her arms tensely over her chest, eyes averted downwards. Her discomfort was palpable.

Tentatively, I inquired if something had upset her. To my surprise, she immediately responded: "Yes. I park my car here sometimes…This is a main street," she added, gesturing

towards the medium-sized road abutting the lot. After a pause in the conversation, she elaborated: “I walk by here all the time. Everyone does. I didn’t know. I mean, I knew about the massacre [tevach] – we all sorta did, well we heard rumors and stuff. But no one told me they were buried here. I didn’t know.”

I had correctly surmised that she was distressed, but assumed that this was due to reluctance on her part to accept the reality about the mass atrocity that had occurred in 1948. I had been wrong. The real issue at stake in this moment was that the familiar landscape of the city, one she thought was well-trodden ground, had just been turned inside out before her eyes. This otherwise unadorned stretch of land, which happened to sit across from a busy throughway, marked out as the site of a mass grave. The same plain, unassuming, unpaved lot she had walked by so many times in the past was thus now transformed into something else entirely.

What made such interventions so potentially affective was their ability to recalibrate the way individuals inhabited and interpreted the spatial markers of their built environment. At some level, then, the *tiyul* [tour] in al-Lydd, as well as its concomitant use of signs and placards, parodied Zionist modes of visuality. This was especially evident in its reliance on forms of “ambulatory vision,” embodied encounters with the landscape, and the production of textual inscriptions to delineate space. At the same time, even as it mimicked a nationalist grammar of sight-seeing, it also undercut the very somatic and semiotic logics it encoded.

As such, these exercises strove to enact a radical reconfiguration of Jewish Israelis’ spatial, visual, and sensorial apprehension of the place they call “home.” As another Zochrot volunteer, who was a resident of Jaffa, explained at a different tour: “I’ve lived here for fifteen years, but it was only when I started learning about the Nakba that I actually saw Jaffa. There are

places that I passed by every day, every week, for years and years, but I didn't even notice them. It was like they were invisible to me. And now I can't stop seeing them everywhere I go."

Within a few months of working with Zochrot, I started to appreciate just what he meant. Looking back at the photos I had taken from the tour to Yajur, I wondered at how I could ever have failed to notice the cemetery; the particular arrangement of limestone, shrubbery, and sabra cactus seemed all-too familiar. This new way of seeing, of course, was not confined to deciphering graveyards, whether in the remains of Al-Nabi buried under Tel Aviv's Hilton Hotel or in the unmarked mass grave of Lod or in the stones marking Yajur's dead. Rather, as the geographer Yair Wallach (2010) put it: "once you start seeing the scars, you'll see them everywhere…Every forest is hiding a destroyed village, every history book an exercise in denial."

In some cases, the material presence of the Nakba could even be deciphered in the construction of the most intimate, domestic, and familial arrangements – that is, inside private residences, in cherished objects, and in unattributed "gifts." It is to these particularly fraught encounters with the visible signs of the Nakba, as woven into the fabric of the Jewish-Israeli household, that I we finally turn to.

7. The Nakba in Your Living Room: Encountering Pilfered Palestinian Objects

I first met Ariella in 2011 at the opening of the "Common Archives" exhibit, featuring testimonials from Zionist militants who recounted war crimes they had committed in 1948. In a packed room, Ariella stood out: the affable, 28-year-old woman was locked in a heated conversation with two much older individuals, both of whom appeared perceptibly uneasy with their surroundings. I later learned the two were her beloved grandparents. Ariella had grown up

knowing they had met as combative fighters in the Palmach (Zionist militia) during 1947-1948 war, but little else was ever told to her about that time period.

In recent years, she had begun questioning them about their Palmach days. Did they witness the expulsion of Palestinian villagers? Did they personally force anyone out of their homes? How could they reconcile their espoused liberal values with the realities of ongoing Nakba? She had brought them there that night in the hope that viewing other Palmach militants confess on camera to their participation in the war crimes of 1948 would open up a space for her grandparents to discuss the role they too might have played in the Nakba.

Things didn't quite pan out as Ariella anticipated. The exhibit left her grandparents defensive, taciturn, and somewhat disturbed. "I've got nothing to apologize for," her grandfather forcefully declared. But Ariella wasn't prepared to let it go. When I asked her, what brought all this to the fore, she replied simply: "It was the mirror in their house." A mirror? "Yes. It doesn't resemble anything else in their house," she told me. Large, ornate, and elegantly carved, the crystal mirror stood out in a home that was otherwise comfortably-but-plainly decorated in neutral tones and modest furnishings. "It never felt like it belonged, which made me love it all the more, but also made me skeptical." Where had it come from? What was it doing in the family's residence? Having already acquired the ability to see the signs of the Nakba in cities and on hikes, Ariella was now beginning to detect the presence of Palestinian ruins everywhere: even in her own grandparents' house.

Finally, she called her grandmother. Could she tell her about the mirror and its history? No, there's no more to tell, she responded. "It was a wedding gift, given long ago." Ariella wasn't satisfied. Didn't she know anything more about it? Who had given it to them, she asked? But her grandmother shrugged off the queries, suggesting that there was nothing to discuss. Two-

days later, however, her grandfather called back with some additional information about the provenance of the mirror. “Yes, it had been a wedding gift,” given to them by his father, and it “probably had come from the Palestinian village of Ramle.” He spoke almost entirely in the passive-voice: it “had come,” it “was given,” etc. But how had it “come” into their possession? Was it actually “given,” or “stolen,” or “plundered”? No, no, he exclaimed defensively: “we are not looters! My father was not a thief.”

A few weeks later, realizing that Ariella remained defiant in her quest to find out what happened with the mirror in 1948, her grandparents agreed to discuss the matter once more. This time, new belated memories of the war surfaced. Backtracking from their earlier, categorical denial, both grandparents recalled witnessing widespread raiding of Palestinian homes, goods, and material possession. All sorts of items – porcelain sets, washing machines, tables, books, and jewelry – would “just appear” in people’s living room. You never asked where the items came from, but everyone knew. So, Ariella pushed on, couldn’t they imagine how, hypothetically, someone in possession of war loot might want to rid themselves of it, divest themselves of the guilt it aroused, even giving it away as a gift? No, they insisted for a second time, our family never participated in any of those activities. We are not those kinds of people.

The conversation didn’t clarify much. The mirror continued to bother Ariella. At last, she turned her attention to researching the history of Ramle, trying to trace the mirror’s origins back to a specific Palestinian family or a house in the village. The more she looked into it, the more other blurred objects and remnants of the Nakba came sharply into focus. Ramle, she learned, stood on the grounds of where she too had grown up, in what is now centrally located Jewish-Israeli town. Even if the mirror itself had not been pillaged from the village, the land upon which her own house stood was certainly built on its stolen soil.

Having already undergone a similar process of training as the teachers, students, and tour participants charted earlier in this chapter, Ariella was capable of recognizing the structures and artifacts she encountered in the built environment, in the city, and even in public parks as indexing the Nakba. However, this new mode of seeing the world did not stop at the doorway of the home. As Yair Wallach put it, "once you start seeing the scars, you'll see them everywhere."

In Ariella's case, this extended beyond the forests and history books named by Wallach to encompass even the most intimate forms of material exchange nestled within the Jewish-Israeli domicile. After all, as a wedding gift given to two recently wedded Palmach militants, the mirror was meant to celebrate both the multiplication of Jewish conjugal life and, metonymically, the reproduction of a future (Israeli) nation. And yet, as an object pillaged from the remains of Ramle, it signals the extent to which the making of both family and state was conjoined with the dispossession of Palestine.

Here, a nagging suspicion over a treasured heirloom portents a new 'way of seeing.' "The mirror was my Pandora's Box," she reflects, "and there's no going back."

While Ami had hoped that the students in the public Nakba seminar would eventually learn to recognize that the signs of 1948 as palpable even today, even "in the heart of Tel Aviv," Ariella goes further, coming to perceive their imbrications in the interior space of her own home. For those whose sensorium is properly attuned, then, the mirror reflects back at them a specter of violence that continues to shape family and nation alike.

8. CODA

The philosopher Martin Jay heralds vision as the "master sense of the modern era" (Jay 1993, 3). This is embodied in the totalizing ways in which seeing is conflated with knowing

(think, for instance, of how we might say "I see" to signify "I understand."). The rise of modernity's "scopic regime," according to Jay and others (eg. Jenks 1995), is indebted to Descartes (1984) partitioning of the sensible. In the Cartesian model, vision was defined as the exemplary sense – sight could be trusted when other senses failed, as the eye was uniquely capable of faithfully transcribing and recording the perceptible world. The ear might mishear, giving rise to misinterpretations, misunderstandings, or worse – false knowledge (Hirschkind 1991). The naked eye, by contrast, was conceived as the one truthful, unwavering, and objective faculty among the senses.

In this chapter, however, the work of Zochrot's activists and Palestinian refugees suggests that the long-standing ideal of the "untutored eye" is a myth. The way one perceives the world is fundamentally linked to who one is, where one was raised, and in which communities of practice one is embedded. What one sees, or fails to see, is far from self-evident; rather, it is an acquired skill. For that reason, it is also a skill that can be retrained in ways that allow individuals to perceive a mass grave buried beneath a parking lot in Lydd, navigate towards the ruins of Yajur's cemetery, and identify purloined Palestinian heirlooms that are hiding in plain sight.

Moreover, as the activists demonstrate in their use of counter-visual strategies, the act of seeing is also intimately connected to non-visual forms of embodied production. This is evident in the knotting of vision with tactile sensations (for example, literally grasping ruins in razed villages) and kinesthetic awareness (coordinating the movement of different bodies in depopulated spaces), as well as audition (listening to refugees' narratives, songs, and stories of the Palestinian lifeworld destroyed in 1948).

As activists in Palestine-Israel continue to experiment with sensory trainings that challenge the learned grammar of state visuality – in an attempt to re-partition the sensible – Israeli policymakers have called for restricting, banning, and even criminalizing the types of activities described in this chapter. From the 2018 "Nakba Law" to the new amendment to the archive law (*Amendment to the Archive Regulations* 2019) extending the classification period for certain materials for 70-90 year, Israeli state institutions have redoubled their efforts to delimit what can be known, commemorated, or publicized about the 1948 Nakba.

In the next chapter, we will look closely at how this form of censorship operates in Palestine-Israel. From overt bans such as the Nakba Law to more subtle instances of everyday bureaucratic erasures, the Israeli state employs a wide range of censorship practices that affect everything from what school textbooks can say about the forced expulsion of refugees in 1948 to how Palestinian spaces are rendered online. But as with the physical residues explored in this chapter, the following chapter considers how censorship leaves traces which, paradoxically, can be repurposed by activists seeking to rematerialize banned objects, places, and people.

Chapter 4 Censored Geographies: Erasing Palestine from the Map

In 2012, the Jewish-Israeli NGO Zochrot published the first edition of its "Nakba Map," plotting the sites of over 500 villages depopulated in Palestine between 1947-1967. As I joined the organization in passing out free copies of the map after its launch event, passersby cursed, spat on, and even physically confronted activists for distributing the document. A few weeks later, the reaction of the street would be mirrored by state officials, who threatened to arrest any individual caught publicly distributing the map for possession of, "incitement material" (Hatuqa 2014). Speaking to the Knesset on 5 February 2012, the Israeli Education Minister, Limor Livnat, went even further in denouncing the Nakba Map:

> What are these Arab villages you are speaking about? This morning I looked at Zochrot's website, where they present this map, and the map is full of dots. *Dots, dots, dots*! Dots, from the north of the country to the south, even south of Beersheba. These dots, which are the 'villages' they talk about, are all over the State of Israel! I even found some in the Tel Aviv area, dozens of dots! (Quoted in Pessah 2012, emphasis mine).

What was perplexing about the Education Minister's horror at confronting "dots, dots, dots" everywhere – even in the heart of Tel Aviv! – was that the map covered a well-trodden terrain. Although it represented the first time that the Nakba's geography of dispossession had been graphed in Hebrew, much of the data encoded in it had long been available in historical documents, as well as in English and Arabic-language texts. As one of the cartographers involved in the project put it: "Most of the information here already existed elsewhere. It

contains little that is completely new." Amir, a Palestinian filmmaker from the Galilee, pointedly concurred with this assessment when asked about the map's ability to impact Jewish-Israeli public opinion: "All Israelis know those things. The issue is not whether they know," but *when* and *if*, "they can recognize the history." Underscoring this point, supporters of Zochrot noted that most of the data mobilized in the diagram was sourced from archival files located in the state's own Surveys Department as well as from the IDF's "village folders" (Morris 2004).

In contrast to typical media representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as caught in a war over the historical content of the map, during the debates that ensued over counter-mapping initiatives such as the Nakba Map, it seemed that neither the facts nor locations inscribed in the remapping of a Palestinian geo-body were under serious contestation. As the former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan remarked in 1969: "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. Nahalal arose in the place of Mahlul, Gvat in the place of Jibta…There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population" (Dayan 1969). Despite this broad agreement over the facts coded in the Nakba Map, the cartographic projects described in this chapter still routinely ran up against state censorship mechanisms, as well as occasional threats of arrest and textual confiscation.

If the Nakba Map did not disclose something new, nor even facts that were particularly unknown by Jewish-Israelis, how do we explain the impetus to censor its content and criminalize its circulation? In taking up this question, I argue that we must look at mapmaking not merely as a representation of space, but also as a social practice that inculcates viewers with a learned disposition to territory, memory, history, and community. From this perspective, the Nakba Map poses a threat not because of what it purports to show, but because of how it reterritorializes the

collective memory of Palestine. After all, even critics of the counter-map rarely treated it as a constative utterance that needed to be empirically corroborated or denied as a factual matter.

In this chapter, I examine both the map and its censorship as kinds of performative utterances that have the power to bring into being the very social geography they encode. In contrast to most of the literature on mapping in Palestine-Israel, which tends approach it as the basis for ideological claims for or against a given territory (Wood 2010), this chapter argues for a different approach, one that attends to: "the work that maps do, how they act to shape our understanding of the world, and how they code that world" (Pickles 2004, 12). As initiatives like the "Nakba Map" demonstrate, censored cartographies of Palestine-Israel enfold not only physical space, but also vectors of loss, hope, and resistance.

Building on the last chapter's analysis of visuality and violence, I turn to the everyday experiences of cartography and censored knowledge, in order to examine spatial practices that extend beyond "the map" as a noun denoting a static referent. In the process, I explore the social life of the map, foregrounding its materiality, as an object lovingly assembled or furtively stored, disseminated and censored, erased and re-written.[1]

To understand the broader impetus behind the mapping and censoring of Palestinian spaces, we must begin by examining the role cartography in the colonialization of Palestine.

1. "A Land Without a People": Erasing Palestine, 1920-1994

[1] In returning to the materiality of the map-object, I am also gesturing to another, submerged history of cartography, a term whose roots in Arabic (خرط) and in Hebrew (חָרַט) – like the Latin tabula or the Italian carta – evoke the physical inscription of surfaces, textiles, and matter. To speak about "the map," in other worlds, requires an analytic attention to both the material object and the medium of objectification.

On the eve of 1948 war, Zionist forces launched an attack against a somewhat surprising target: the British Department of Maps and Surveys (Ben-Ze'ev 2011). Located in a drab, olive-gray building in southern Tel-Aviv, the department had been among the largest constructed by the Mandatory Government in the 1920s. Along with providing a centralized archive of historic imprints passed on from the Ottoman era, the Mandatory Surveys Unit was tasked with developing town plans, cadastral records, as well as demarcating administrative and political boundaries in Mandate Palestine (Gavish 2005). Throughout the intervening years, British colonial surveyors would go on to produce one of the most expansive geodeictic inventories ever recorded in the region. By the mid-1940s, Zionist militias understood that their own rudimentary mappings paled in comparison to the thousands of detailed topographic and aerial images stored inside the secure British facility. And so, as the declaration of war was announced over the radio in early spring of 1948, top ranked Haganah officers put into motion a plan to capture the inconspicuous edifice, later rechristening the building: The Israeli Department of Maps and Surveys [*Mapui Israel*].

In the months and years that followed, occupying and renaming sites would become a veritable pastime of the Israeli state. Only days following the signing of the last Armistice Agreement in 1949, during a moment when the new state faced mammoth infrastructure challenges and an unprecedented housing shortage, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion saw one issue as paramount: the need to re-write the territory to reflect a unified Hebrew identity (Benvenisti 2000). Convening a meeting with nine prominent Israeli geographers, cartographers, and surveyors, Ben-Gurion inaugurated what became known as the "Governmental Names Commission." The new body was charged with codifying a "national toponymy," drafting the official "Hebrew map," and investing the land with biblical significance.

In Israel as elsewhere, mapping has often been deployed as a kind of war by other means (Monmonier 2014; Crampton 2001; Cosgrove and della Dora 2005). This is certainly how Ben-Gurion understood the act of redrawing Palestine, which he believed would, "complete the job begun by the Israeli Defense Forces" (quoted in Azaryahu and Golan 2001, 187). The depopulation of Palestinian villages and their erasure from the grid, he argued, had to proceed as two sides of the same coin. Writing to the Names Commission in 1949, Ben-Gurion stressed the importance of removing all Arabic toponymies from the new state's official record: "As long as the names did not appear in maps, they cannot take possession in life," he explained (Ben-Gurion 1950, 2). This sentiment encapsulated the core of Israel's "map and grab" strategy, deployed to such devastating effect since the earliest days of Zionist colonization.

Yet for all of the emphasis placed between 1948-1951 on the need for a "Hebrew map," the Israeli Governmental Names Commission faced serious financial, material, and logistical obstacles. For one, all of the topographic references available at the time had been acquired by stealth from the old British Surveys Department. But these documents displayed transliterated Arabic placenames, and furthermore, represented a spatial ordering that the 1948 war had sought to upend. As an interim solution, the commission suggested using the 1942 British Survey Ordnance as a "background" layer, upon which a new geography could be superimposed. Israeli field units were sent out to conduct landscape surveys using the inherited records, but with instructions to cross out names of the depopulated villages encountered along the way. The commission then delineated the post-1948 landscape by overprinting the word "*Harus*" [destroyed] next to every Palestinian site that had been emptied, razed, or destroyed during the Nakba. Combined, the final map-object comprised of two intertwined historical, geographic, and cartographic layers (see Figure 12).

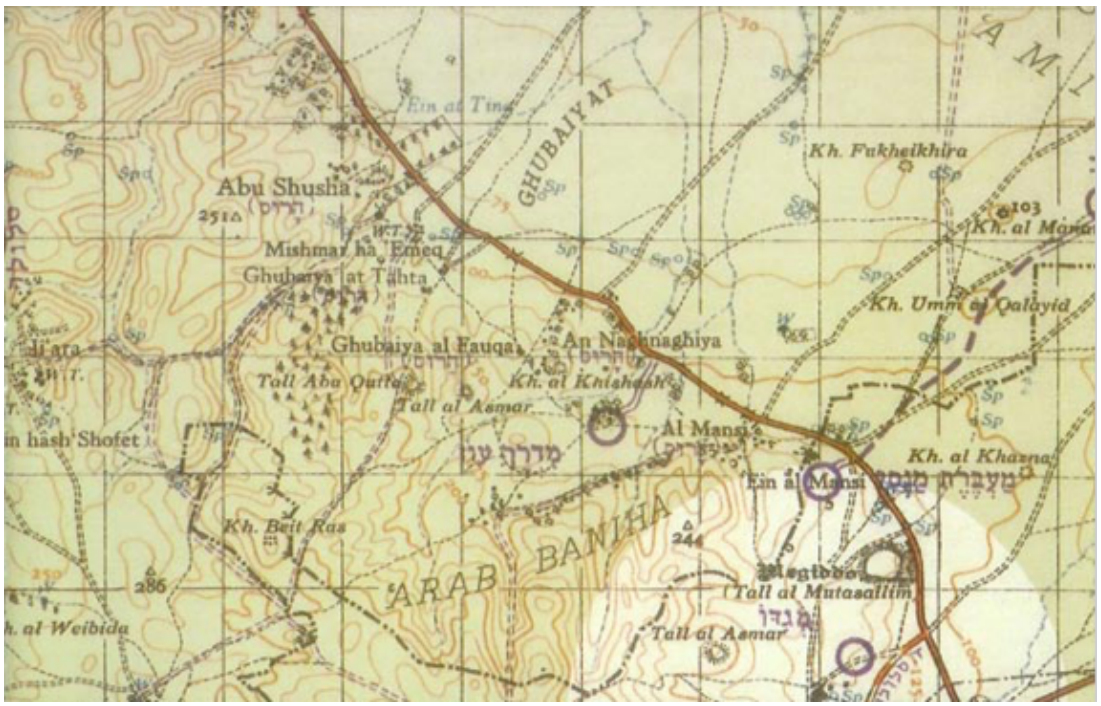


Figure 12 Harus Map. Credit: Mapui Israel.

However, in attempting to forge this new "Hebrew map" – a kind of mirror-image for Israel's founding myth of Palestine as "a land without a people, awaiting a people without a land" – the Names Commission inadvertently captured the very acts of dispossession that the state had sought to banish from the official record. In effect, the desire to erase Arabic nomenclature became the condition of possibility for preserving Palestinian toponymies in the "backdrop" of Israel's territorial rendering. Today, the gap between the Zionist vision of Palestine as *terra nullius*, and the historical reality of Palestinian presence, is registered in the negative space between the two layers of the *Harus* series, between figure and ground, past and present.

As so often happens with cartographic projects, the *Harus* map took on a life of its own. Palestinian refugees, scholars, and activists – who were searching for a means of charting not only the landscape of the Nakba, but also possible routes of return – made recourse to the Israeli archive in an unexpected way. As one interlocutor, a Palestinian refugee and amateur historian

from the village of al-Ruways, explained: "You learn to hear what the map is whispering behind the scenes." Or in the words of another colleague, "we read the map against the grain." In this vein, Walid Khalidi's (1992) classic study *All That Remains* mobilizes data about depopulated villages found in the *Harus* series in an effort to document the historical scale of destruction experienced during the 1948 Nakba. Likewise, Salman Abu-Sitta's (2004) magnum opus, *Atlas of Palestine: 1917-1966,* dedicates hundreds of pages to tracing over the absence/presence of Palestinian villages in the first generation of Israeli state topography. More recent attempts to visualize a Palestinian "geo-body" – including in digital projects such as www.palestineremembered.com, Palestine's Google Earth Layer, and the *iNakba* app discussed later on – build on many of these earlier ventures into the archives of Ottoman, British, and Israeli Maps Departments.

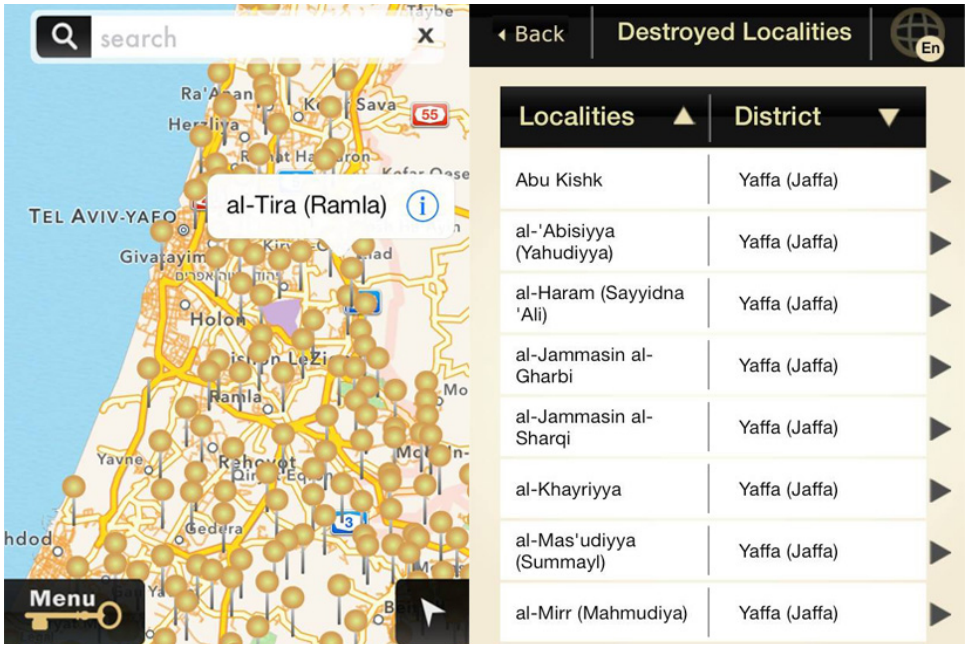
If the *Harus* Map – along with its sometimes-surprising resurfacing in the later works of Palestinian historians and geographers – teaches us anything, it is that there is always excess involved in the act of boundary-drawing. In what follows, I turn to the role of spatial censorship in shaping geographic knowledge in ways that make "writing territory" such a fundamentally generative, unpredictable, and often ineluctable activity.

2. "YOU ARE HERE": NAVIGATING CENSORED GEOGRAPHIES WITH INAKBA

If before this moment, Palestine had been "erased from the map," then the introduction of the *iNakba* app aimed to – in the words of Raneen Jeris, the app's chief architect – "restore Palestine to history and geography." Launched in 2014, the *iNakba* app builds on open-source mobile maps to provide geo-location coordinates and directions for navigating to the hundreds of depopulated villages located within the Green Line (Figure 13). As the Palestinian-Canadian

lawyer and activist Diana Buttu put it while searching for her father's village near Nazareth on the app: "This is really powerful that they're trying to make these places come back and put them back on the map."

Figure 13 Screenshot of iNakba app. Credit: iNakba/M. Ran-Rubin.



Within the Green Line, the absence of road infrastructure and signposts demarcating significant sites tied to historic Palestine underpins the geographic fiction of Israel as a "land without a people for a people without a land." As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, Israeli cartography removes the names, locations, and spatial histories of depopulated Palestinian villages from its official territorial renderings. Even local neighborhood maps avoid documenting Palestinian landmarks or placenames (Benvenisti 1997). Traveling to depopulated villages such as Al-Ruways or Mi'ar – sites discussed in later chapters – involves taking a series of unnamed, unpaved backroads that only sporadically appear on publicly-available maps. Prior to the release of *iNakba*, the infrastructural and spatial erasure of historic Palestine left few viable pathways for navigating this censored geography without local guidance.

Despite the innovativeness of *iNakba*, the app's spatial repository reflects decades of earlier work undertaken by Palestinian historians who produced detailed compendiums of the village sites that Israeli cartographers had tried to excise from the map. To create a digital topology of the Nakba, Raneen's team spent over two years combing through pages of village histories, as well as Walid Khalidi's (1992) *All That Remains*, Salman Abu-Sitta's (2004) *Atlas of Palestine*, and Zochrot's (2012) "Nakba Map." They also sourced data to dozens of village history books, many of which diagramed pre-1948 village spaces using non-scale "memory maps" (Davis 2011). The student engineers working with Raneen meticulously cataloged and geo-tagged the names, coordinates, geographic attributes, and meta-data associated with hundreds of destroyed Palestinian locales. In this sense, each iteration of a depopulated village cites a previous plotting, mapping both the landscape of the Nakba and the collective refusal to let the *Harus* map have the final say on Palestine's spatial future.

At the same time, *iNakba* draws on a rich and varied tradition of what Susan Slyomovics (1998) calls "mapping loss," in her study of memory and oral history in the former Palestinian village of Ein Houd. Writing about the ways refugees circulate aerial photos, hand drawn maps, cadastral records, and other spatial icons of depopulated villages, Slyomovics argues that these documents were never, "inert records of the landscape nor passive reflections of the world"; rather, they provide a medium for reconstructing, remembering, and reinscribing the geography of Palestinian sites that are socially co-present but physically absent (Slyomovics 1998, 9). In a similar vein, users of *iNakba* visualize historic Palestine by carving out routes through the terrain

of 1948, calling out the names of depopulated villages along with crowd-sources stories uploaded to the app by refugees displaced from these sites.

While the app promises to chart a path into the destruction of historic Palestine, Raneen and her team stress that *iNakba* was not designed to reduce the "atlas of ruin" to the two-dimensional confines of the grid for the sake of making Palestine accessible to the itinerant tourist. As Raneen put it to me soon after the app's release: "The map won't help you get around," if anything, "it should make it *harder*."

But if *iNakba*'s GPS navigational system is not intended to facilitate movement from point A to point B, then what exactly is it doing? In order to see how the app intervenes into the political space of Israel-Palestine, we need to situate *iNakba* in the context of its everyday use as a locative technology that interfaces between the user, the mobile screen, and the act of navigating an unfamiliar terrain.

3. Driving in Israel-Palestine with a De-Territorialized Map

"You have arrived at your destination," a programmed female voice intoned on the iNakba app. At first glance, the "destination" appeared to be nothing but an empty field. Perhaps I had taken the wrong exit, I wondered? However, a quick glance at the mobile screen confirmed that I had arrived at the intended site: "You are in Yazur (District of Jaffe), Population: 4,680. Occupied: May 1st, 1948." Touching the golden pushpin marking my location enabled the app to quickly triangulate the phone's GPS signal with a digital database documenting all 550 Palestinian villages depopulated in the 1948. In Yazur, which once stretched over a grassy knoll adjacent to the famous Old Jaffe-Ramle Road, a few more clicks quickly pulled up the coordinates of the village's extant ruins: the shrine of Shaykh al-Katanan was not far from the

highway, while the tomb of Imam ʻAli and the remains of a mosque could be found on the other side of the road.

As a digital mapping of the Nakba, travelling with the application is a little bit like traversing one of Freud's "night dreams" (Freud 1965). The "first mark" of the dreamscape is its undoing of the "temporal order of events" (Freud 1965, 81). In place of a linear or sequential narration of past-time, the dream condenses the layers of memories into image-sites. In its virtual reconstruction of the map-scape, *iNakba* produces a similar effect, transforming "events" into "loci" that are infused with refugee narratives, memories, and spatial histories.

While historians might approach the Nakba as a synchronic event with distinct periodization ("1948," "1967," etc.), *iNakba* offers a diachronic method for mapping the past onto a "mashup" of sites. Each place might trigger narratives associated with a multiplicity of past-times – for instance, the story of al-Ruways includes its establishment in the era of Salah al-Din, its depopulation in 1948, as well as the subsequent demolitions of 1951 alongside contemporary return practices – all of which can be read backwards and forewords from the site itself. Here, unlike in the archive's distribution of knowledge according to defined time segments, we find that the "historical particulars" acquire new depths and associations, producing unexpected "constellations" (Benjamin 2002, 403).

But the digitally remapped past is itself partial and incomplete. The goal in using the app is not to attain full command of the landscape, as one might while using the aid of a traditional GPS device to arrive at a given destination. Rather, *iNakba* aims to undo the very sense of mastery that is the hallmark of official state cartography. The point, in fact, is to suture together ruins of the past with the present geography in a way that upends the habitual flow of associations. As Zochrot's co-founder Eitan Bronstein put it: "This map trains us to be careful, to

look closely at what's in this country we know so well but in fact discover suddenly it contains an unfamiliar layer which we treat reverently, careful not to erase it again." In this way, *iNakba* is engaged with the "task of surprising rather than explaining the present" (Buck-Morss 2000, 68).

While *iNakba* shares affinities with past counter-mappings of Palestine, such as Abu-Sitta's (2004) *Atlas*, the app cannot be understood solely in terms of its common subject matter, the depopulated villages. For one, unlike an earlier generation of "mapping loss" projects, which focused on amassing historical, archeological, and spatial data in order to reconstruct a material world of dispossession. *iNakba* provides a palimpsest of layers of information through the interface of the mobile screen: here, the archive goes with you. This kind of locative media, combined with GPS-driven navigational software (either Google or Waze), aims to make the past itself navigable and open to investigation. This is knowledge "on the move," not in place.

When put into habitual use, *iNakba* immerses the user in a geographic imaginary that transforms Livnat's "dots, dots, dots!" into real places whose histories, names, memories endure in the built environment. From the *Harus Map* to *iNakba*, we have seen that censored geographies are always imperfect, incomplete, and unfinished. Censorship leaves traces of its omissions, and those residual marks provide the signposts for future reconstructions of the absences left behind.

Nor is cartography the only domain of spatial knowledge subject to this dynamic of censorship and elision. In what follows, I look at how censorship regulations limit access to archival documents, allowing the state to gatekeep land records from before and after the establishment of the state of Israel.

4. Cartography and Censorship in the Archives

The fact that erasure and censorship always leave telltale signs in their wake is nowhere more evident than in the archives. This, I discovered in March 2013, when I began collaborating with a group of architects and artists on prospective designs for a future Nakba commemoration site. The Nakba Museum was to be built on the grounds of an old, abandoned IDF installation in the village of Beit Dagan (pre-1948, *Bayt Dajan*). From a practical standpoint, the project sounded feasible: gut the interior of the base, salvage the façade, much of which had been built by a Palestinian factory owner in the late 1930s, and recycle the remaining materials to construct new edifices that could be used for refugee returnees. The village's original structures were in remarkably good condition – so much so that, beyond basic restoration work, all that would be required of the architects would be to the draw up blueprints for repurposing the now abandoned base.

In practice, however, any attempt to visually render or materially intervene into militarized spaces, even decommissioned ones like Beit Dagan, ran into many of the same problems of censorship discussed earlier. For one, as is the case for all Israeli military installations, the IDF required that imagery of the site be blurred out from commercially available GPS systems, creating a literal "white patch" when viewed on public maps such as Google or Mapquest (Figure 14). In a context where the IDF officially holds mapping rights to nearly 80-percent of publicly administrated lands, the limits placed on charting territory have wide ranging effects (Agha 2018; Hasian 2016). The combined effect of these cartographic embargos, alongside the IDF's policy of rezoning large public tracts as "closed military areas," ensures that the army retains a near-total "monopoly over spatial development" (Newman 2009, 861). Moreover, without topographic maps of the area, planning any future construction for these sites is an ongoing challenge.

Figure 14 Compare Google Map Resolution for Jerusalem vs. Cairo. Credit: Google/M. Ran Rubin.

But for the architects, artists, and planners involved in Beit Dagan, it was precisely the challenges posed by working towards demilitarizing a depopulated Palestinian village that furnished the motivation for the project. As Alon, the chief architect, explained in an early memo to the group: "Censoring information about *Bayt Dajan* not only obscures the army's ongoing land grab, it also removes the history of Palestinian ownership upon which this and countless other bases were built." For Alon, this double act of erasure worked both to conceal the violence of Israel's past – as exemplified in the Nakba and the ongoing occupation – as well as the conditions for sustaining future acts of militarization. The architects thus envisioned their work as part of a broader effort to produce a counter-cartography of the site, which would undo the work of censorship, quite literally, "putting Palestine back on the map." In the process, they would also reveal a landscape of dispossession that had remained socially co-present even after being rendered physically absent.

Before the architects could begin work on the blueprint for a reconstructed Bayt Dajan, they needed some way of scaling their drawing of the site to its physical measurements and proportions. Moreover, since the building they most wanted to preserve in their design of the Nakba Museum was the Palestinian-owned factory building, whose façade had miraculously survived intact despite decades of use by the Israeli army, they believed it would be possible to retrieve the original plans for the structure in archival documents from the British Mandate era.

While the architects were drawn to the site for its structural integrity, they also cherished the way it concretized a history of Palestinian modernity that is often neglected in conventional narrations of the Nakba. The Bayt Dajan textile plant had been a massive enterprise, constructed under the joint auspices of Amhad Abu Laban of Jaffa and Muhammad Rashed Kanaan of Nablus. According to the latter's son, after a 1947 United Nations fact-finding mission headed by Wendell Willkie toured the facility in Bayt Dajan, the former vice-presidential candidate made a special note about it in his personal diary: "If ever there was a modern factory, this factory is certainly one of them." Less than one-year after Wilkie penned this note, the plant fell into IDF hands, and there it remained until the army gave it up during the early 2000s.[2] For the architects, then, intervening into the decommissioned base reopened a pathway into the often-overlooked landscape of urban Palestine.

As one of the few non-architects involved in the project, I was anxious to play a supportive role in the only way I knew how: through the archives. But trying to retrieve aerial shots of the area around the Beit Dagan base, including historic photos taken before 1948 (that is,

[2] There was nothing exceptional about the IDF's decision to either keep or abandon this particular site. Between 2001-2010, according to the Israeli state comptroller's annual reports, the number of abandoned bases soared by 60-percent. While the reasons behind such decisions are rarely made public, the presumption in most cases is that the IDF is unwilling to finance the upkeep of aging structures.

before an army installation ever existed on the site), proved far more challenging than any of us anticipated. During the initial trip to the archives, I was taken aside and briefly interrogated by an IDF officer stationed at the Israeli Maps Department. Why, he wanted to know, was I expressing such interest in this particular area? Alon had prepared me for the possibility that something like this might happen. Calmly, I rehearsed the line we had practiced for just such an occasion: "I need this shot to complete dissertation research on historical Bauhaus architecture in the pre-state period." Confused, the officer asked, "Bauhaus? I thought it was an Arab village?" Well yes, I replied, "and a large, Bauhaus-style factory was built there, too." He looked skeptical but agreed to photocopy my ID and promised to return in a few minutes. As I waited, the archivist chimed in to say that I would soon "need to find a new thesis": the image I had requested was censored.

This was cartographic secrecy at work. On the one hand, according to a 1998 Israeli law on information access, archivists are allowed to deny requests for specific files if they suspect it might prove, "damaging to the state's security" (Forte 2003, 163). On the other hand, the question of "what constitutes sensitive material" is left undefined in the law. In deciding which image releases might qualify as "sensitive," the archivist must implicitly take into the consideration the specificity of the site – here, its Palestinian past and militarized future loom large ("I thought it was an Arab village?"). The act of reexamining the terrain, along with the implicit acknowledgment it affords of the history of depopulation in Palestinian towns, becomes the calculative framework through which bureaucrats determine if and when historical maps constitute a threat to the nation.

Since the distribution of knowledge in the archives relies on individual bureaucrats who must judge the sensitivity of historical records on a case-by-case basis, the end result is a censorship regime that functions as more of a patchwork than a blanket ban. In later trips to the

Maps Department, I managed to retrieve a number of pre-1948 aerial images of depopulated villages, which in theory, should have been characterized as no less "sensitive" than the banned aerial shot of Bayt Dajan. Not surprisingly, the decision to withhold or release parts of the archival record often came down to the archivist's familiarity with the landscape and their own subjective assessment of "risk."

Yet even during my first foray into the archives of the Israeli Maps Department, the logic of censorship had a funny way of foregrounding the very thing it sought to occlude. While pointing to a note warning that the requested file was inaccessible, the archivist added one further observation: "isn't there an abandoned army base in that area?" Listening to our conversation, the IDF officer who had just returned with my ID card responded by nodded knowingly. "Yes, yes, there definitely was a base there," as though this were sufficient reason for why the map would be classified. The fact that the aerial photo was taken in 1944 – almost ten years prior to the erection of the military installation – seemed to make little difference. I pressed on, what was the point of banning the imagery after they had already confirmed the existence *and* location of the now-decommissioned Beit Dagan base? After all, if knowledge of the derelict facility was so common that both the archivist and the soldier could recognize it by the village's name alone, what was the purpose of keeping me away from a largely outdated printed map?

The alternate hide-and-reveal game played in the archives highlights one of the more puzzling aspects of cartographic secrecy: it appears to conceal a domain of geographic knowledge, which, in reality, is often quite widely known but whose bureaucratic framing as a "secret" is nevertheless vital to the constitution of the state's security apparatus (Masco 2010). In the context of the Beit Dagan army base, its location constitutes a public secret whose safeguarding in the archives trains Israeli citizens to "know what not know" (Taussig 1999).

Classified geographies do not merely function as tools for barring information. Instead, as George Simmel famously argued, secrecy is a disciplinary technique geared towards instilling subjects with the proper disposition for apprehending both social and spatial relations. In this context, banning the circulation of archival images from Beit Dagan had less to do with preventing access to "sensitive" data about the village's pre-1948 life, as it did with encouraging the Jewish-Israeli public sphere to regard this sort of information as integral to their national security.

Despite this attempt to remove from view the remnants of a Palestinian lifeworld, censorship paradoxically works to train mapmaker and map-user alike to be *all the more* attuned to the thing which must be occluded from view. That is, in order to "cover up" an IDF installation in an aerial shot or ensure that archival files about depopulated villages remain out of reach, the regulator has to be constantly "on the lookout" for potentially "troublesome" telltale signs. As the surveyors who drew up the *Harus* map knew all too well, in order to erase certain features of the landscape, one often has to first confront and contain its presence in other visible forms.

In this sense, cartographic secrecy is less about the suppression of knowledge than it is about governing routes of knowing, seeing, and delimiting the world. As Jess Bier (2014) indicates in her research with surveyors in Israeli and Palestinian organizations, there are numerous instances in NGO mappings when a particular landscape feature, "such as a sandy hill or a tuft of scrub grass," is copied and pasted to "another area in the same image to hide a military installation" (Bier 2014, 144). Though viewers might see, two identical dirt hills, one of these will typically cover over some prominent military structure which, beyond the map is, "quite visible through the car window" (Bier 2014, 144). Here as in the archive, this

juxtaposition between the conspicuousness of army installations in full view and their invisibility on the map suggests that censorship has much more to do with maintaining social and political fault lines than in safeguarding state secrets.

The cumulative effect of censorship is to perforate a boundary-zone between the initiated and the excluded, between those who belong and those on the outside, between occupier and occupied. What these projects sought to reveal, therefore, was not only the existence of a Palestinian factory from the 1930s – hidden in plain sight beneath an abandoned military base – but rather, the very logic of censorship that renders such spaces unmappable. In so doing, the architects working on Beit Dagan sought a means for rejecting the censor's mandate to rewrite Palestine's geography as *terra nullius.*

At the same time, the Beit Dagan project, as well as the ensuing public debates over counter-mapping initiatives such as the "Nakba Map," did not merely represent a "corrective" or "alternative" to existing maps and officially sanctioned geographies of Israel-Palestine. Rather, as one Zochrot supporter put it: "We are not trying to create a substitute," but to "create a new arena," a new space and praxis of political consciousness.

The need for a "new arena" only became more evident to me in the months following the initial failure to retrieve historical aerial images of Beit Dagan, and especially so as I began paying more attention to some of the subtle and not-so-subtle effects of censorship regulations on the production of maps among Israeli NGOs, Palestinian civil society groups, and other non-state actors. While in theory Palestinian political institutions and non-governmental bodies operating in the occupied territories are less constrained by Israeli mapping restrictions, the reality is far more complicated. In turning to this issue, I examine the diffusion of censorship logics far

beyond their initial appearance in the sphere of state or military bureaucracy, looking instead to the broader infrastructures of knowledge-production within and beyond the Green Line.

5. Non-State Mappings: Internalizing the Censor's Lens

Censorship is rarely limited to the official blacklisting of potentially "sensitive" sites in government-issued maps. Indeed, the geographic sensibility honed through the practice of embargo can be equally discerned within myriad non-state, humanitarian, and NGO mappings. The Jewish-Israeli NGO "Peace Now," which creates and maintains a mobile "Settlement Watch Map" that charts the expansion of Jewish outposts in the occupied West Bank, is emblematic of this process. On the surface, the Settlement Map shares much in common with the Bayt Dajan project, as well as with other visual-activist strategies for making visible the occupation. Moreover, the "Settlement Map," like these other experiments with visual politics, uses an "open source" digital platform hailed for providing transparent access to public data.

Despite these similarities, Peace Now's humanitarian maps excise a key piece of the story: namely, the location of IDF bases is selectively removed from their online grid (Bier 2017). Thus, even as they encode one mode of occupation (settlement construction), the organization inevitably reproduces another (the IDF's control over mapping).

Such omissions are far from unusual. As one Israeli cartographer, who occasionally free-lanced for NGOs such as Peace Now as well as for governmental agencies, pointed out to me: "The human rights groups are even more careful than the army when it comes to editing out anything classified, because they don't want to get tagged with harming security." As a result, Peace Now's "Settlement Map," in theory designed to protest the annexation of Palestinian lands, employs the same cartographic principles of secrecy and security that undergird the occupation writ large.

While the "Settlement Map" offers an especially illustrative example of the diffusion of spatial restrictions far beyond the bureaucratic sphere of the archive, it was hardly exceptional in its vision of a counter-map beset by a contradictory need to simultaneously disclose and withhold geographic facts. In interviews, Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli activists and mapmakers frequently noted the subtle and pervasive effect of censorship on their work. For one, in order to avoid running afoul of military restrictions, independent mapmakers had to account for those areas the army deemed "classified." But doing so on their own proved nigh impossible, since the IDF refused to provide this information to non-state cartographers, arguing that this would risk "exposing state secrets." Without this data, the cartographers were forced to, "think like a bureaucrat," as one GIS consultant put it. In effect, the system relied as much on individual means of instituting and inhabiting a restrictive geography as it did on the coercive power of the army to demarcate borders. As a result, non-state mapmakers were made to act as self-regulating censors, inscribing Jewish-Israeli territorial concerns onto their varied cartographies.

By contrast to conventional understandings of censorship as a top-down process, the bureaucratic and legal restrictions on architects, activists, and geographers entailed a more distributed and decentralized organization of cartographic knowledge than typically given in accounts of hierarchical and state-based interdictions. The process of learning to inhabit the bureaucrat's point-of-view shaped not only the content of official and unofficial mappings, it also circumscribed the way individuals learned to approach lived spaces: "once you start viewing things as either potential targets or threats, it can be very difficult to think them in any other way," the same GIS consultant surmised. The putative need for secrecy, in this sense, has as much to do with enabling an individual's *sensorial* capacity to view space through the lens of national security as it does with abiding by the *censorial* limits set by the state.

In this regard, it is helpful to understand censorship not only as a mechanism for banning information, but also as a means for fostering and foreclosing certain ways of apprehending the world. What is kept off the grid – whether it be an army base or a depopulated village or even just the representation of borders – tells us much more about the way state violence is imbricated on the landscape than it does about the specific layouts or topographies of Israel-Palestine.

The pervasiveness of censorship in both state and non-state mappings points to a fundamental issue faced in all counter-mapping exercises. In order to document state violence, mapmakers need to be able to represent state spaces. But if the end result is a map that must blur out military installations, paper over roadblocks, and conceal IDF surveillance towers, then the NGO-produced cartography has failed to meaningfully challenge the underlying conditions that maintain the status quo in the occupied territories.[3]

While many Israeli NGOs accede to the demands of Israeli censorship in framing their mapping projects, as was the case with Peace Now, Palestinian-led projects in the oPt offer an alternative model for negotiating the effects of spatial erasure.

6. Palestine's "Homegrown" Maps: Claiming Terra, Making Subjects

While Peace Now and other Israeli NGOs often took for granted the necessity of geographic censorship, Palestinian activists did not accept the claim that mapping in the West Bank needed to shield the IDF rather than exposing the effects of ongoing military occupation. Instead, Palestinian mapmakers often traded jokes and stories that pointed out the absurdity of embargoing a geographic space that exists in reality, whether or not it exists on the map. On one

[3] Arguably, to be truly effective, the performance of spatial knowledge must somehow elide existing censorship conventions, which after all are central to its object of critique. Indeed, they must somehow forge new conditions of custom and authority through which their future felicity will ultimately be judged.

occasion, a GIS student from Al-Quds university related a story to me about the time Israeli soldiers barged into the home of an elderly couple in occupied East Jerusalem after hearing reports that they had hung an "illegal" map of Palestine from a window. After searching for hours, overturning furniture, and tearing through the couple's belongings, the soldiers eventually came across a comic strip that included a geographic representation of Palestine. Seeing that this cartoon map depicted a territorial span extending to both historic Palestine and the Occupied West Bank, the soldiers insisted that it be removed from the property and destroyed.

While this particular tale might have been apocryphal, there is no doubt that Israeli military censors have targeted cartoon maps, including barring publication of the late Naji al-Ali's drawings of Palestine's boundaries as made out of barbed wire and a kufiyyah (Najjar 2007; 1999) to similar bans on Omayya Joha's juxtaposition of the map and the refugee's key (Lynfield 2001).

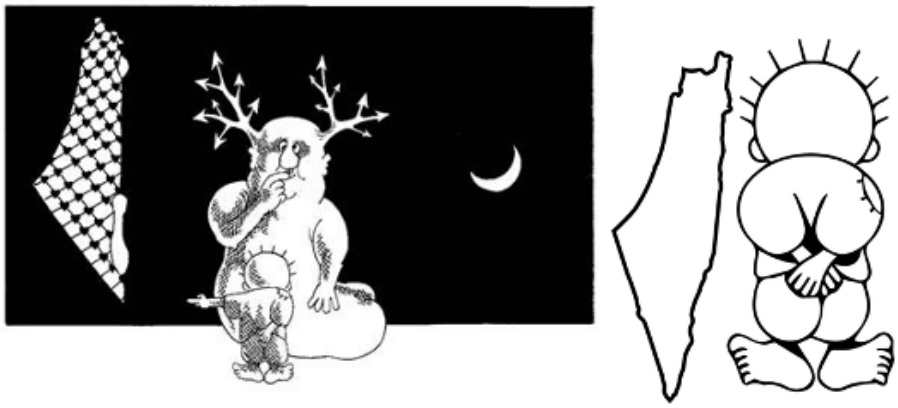


Figure 15 Censored cartoons showing non-scaled iconography of Palestine. Credit: Naji al-Ali.

What is fascinating is that the censored cartoons did not purport to show an accurate, scientific, or scaled representation of Palestine (Figure 15). Neither Omayya Joha's nor Naji al-Ali's sketches contain a bar, legend, title, or any other topographical guide for demarcating Palestinian space with precision. Rather, the cartoon maps provide an imaginative, and at times

uneasy, exploration of spatial relations and national identity. While the banned cartoons therefore bore little resemblance to the detailed aerial shots I had sought in the archives, Israeli military censors view the publication of both kinds of cartographic imagery with equal suspicion.

For many Palestinian cartographers, the fact that military censors targeted the circulation of these non-representational depictions of Palestine indicated how essential it was to have access to homegrown maps. Building on this point, in recent years, Palestinian mapmakers have lobbied for greater public support to produce the kinds of scaled, high-resolution maps that could potentially challenge the censored cartographies produced by Israeli state and nongovernmental institutions. These appeals have contributed to increased funding for GIS mappings, as well as generating a host of local DIY map projects (see Chapter 5 for more on DIY maps). This, in spite of the still pervasive feeling among many Palestinians that cartography represents a science of colonialism, not liberation.

To the extent that the need for maps has become more commonly accepted, we can trace this shift in public sentiment to the failings and aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords. As Yosef Jabareen, a well-known urban planner and Palestinian refugee, recalled: "Oslo forced us to tackle the map. Because, you know, the Palestinian envoys showed up at the talks with nothing. It was so bad that, one day, I got this phone call from a relative of mine who was part of the negotiation team, and he asks me to send him documents showing the 1949 armistice line, because, you know, they only had these copies of whatever the Israelis had brought to Oslo." Chuckling, Jabareen continued: "Can you imagine? I was just an MA student! What did I know about maps? So finally, I asked him, "were you planning to build a country on *my* shoulders?" Likewise, in a piece on the Oslo Accords tellingly titled "Facts, Facts, and More Facts," Edward Said suggests that the role of these documents was paramount: "They had the plans, the territory, the maps, the

settlements, the roads: we have the wish for autonomy and Israeli withdrawal, with no details, and no power to change anything very much" (Said 1996, 27). What was needed, therefore, was a new "discipline of detail, enabling "Palestinians to know and understand the overall map that the Israelis have been creating, and then devise concrete tactics of resistance" (Said 1996, 27).

While a number of Palestinian NGOs have since taken up this challenge, as we shall see, the effect of spatial embargos remains pervasive even for those mapmakers operating in parts of the occupied territories ostensibly free of military censors.[4] The creation of new maps relies on aerial and digital infrastructures that can be hard to come by in the occupied territories. In Palestine, efforts at plotting occupied spaces reveal not only the physical territory and its erasure, but also the gaps in the digital network and survey institutions that form the backbone of large-scale, state mapping projects.

7. Infrastructures of Knowledge: Censoring Digital Palestine

While the architects in Beit Dagan had to deal with censorship restrictions that limited their access to historic, pre-1948 aerial maps of Palestine, their particular experience reflected only a small slice of a much larger arena of struggle over satellite photographs. In part because Jewish-Israelis rarely had either the need or occasion for noticing the routine censorship of aerial data in Palestine, they are largely unaware of how the state creates a separate visual field for sites in the Green Line versus the oPt by imposing disparate image resolution, scope, and depth rules on satellite imagery from occupied spaces.

[4] For example: ARIJ, Land Research Center, POICA, and the Arab Studies Association.

By contrast, for Palestinians living under occupation, there was little doubt that the Israeli state's ability to censor had a direct impact on their capacity to create detailed, scaled representations. As one young cartographer explained when I asked her why she got involved in GIS Palestine activism: "One day, I looked up Salah al Din Street [a major throughway that cuts across East Jerusalem] on Google Maps and wondered why it was surrounded by blurry, blank spaces. Then I looked up King George Street in Tel Aviv, and it was amazing. Immediately, you could see everything in high-resolution. So, I realized, this is what they must see here: nothing but blank spaces." In other words, the map not only plotted, but also reproduced, the censorship of geography that aimed to reduce Palestine to a kind of *terra nullius*.

At issue here was not simply the question of what the map hides or reveals, but rather the way it defined *who* and *what* could be viewed, as well as the conditions of viewership. As Donna Haraway argues, vision is "always a question of the power to see" and the "violence implicit in visualizing practice," as well as of the power of looking when others cannot (Haraway 2013, 192). In this sense, there is perhaps nothing odd about the fact that occupying forces would be especially concerned with restricting aerial imagery. After all, the very metaphor and meaning of modern state power is imagined to be a "top down" operation (Scott 1998). But if modern statecraft relied on adopting the bird's eye view in order to produce disembodied viewers capable of seeing all from nowhere, then in the Israeli context, it has taken on an elevated role: with the "politics of verticality" (Weizman 2007) practiced in the occupied territory, where settlements claim hilltops and overlook Palestinian communities in the valley, limiting the view from the sky is as crucial to maintaining territorial control as implementing more conventional land-based surveillance. The issue here was not just one of censorship, but rather, as Hagit – a DIY aerial

expert who worked in East Jerusalem – put it: the problem is that "they hover above and we are at the bottom."

Though the "digital occupation" of Palestine might be less immediately obvious to outside observers than the checkpoints and the Separation Wall, its effect on the possibility of organizing spatial resistance is both pervasive and damaging. To see the visible outcomes of such measures, one only has to look at the differences between state-approved representations of Gaza City versus official delineations of West Jerusalem on Google Maps. While the latter, along with other civilian areas within the Green Line, is rendered in precise detail, militarized and occupied spaces in Gaza and the West Bank routinely appear as unfocused blots on the map. Equally stark is the difference between these fragmented cartographies and the kinds of high-resolution imagery of specific areas within Gaza City, which are now occasionally accessible on open-source platforms such as Open Street Maps (OSM), but which represent outliers given the general lack of mapping resources and digital capabilities. In both cases, what we see is the creation of a virtual patchwork that enables and forecloses certain kinds of geographic representations while safeguarding the right of the Israeli state to govern the underlying infrastructure of aerial knowledge.

While the resulting "white patches" on the digital map of Palestine might entail a different mode of censorship than the one found in the archives, in practice, it is guided by a shared principle: in both cases, sustaining cartographic restrictions has little to do with "security" and everything to do with delimiting the conditions of producing and circulating spatial knowledge. But to the extent that more recent open-source cartographies of Palestine aim not only to remap territory, but also to build the backbone of an emerging digital infrastructure, they enact a different kind of counter-scopic politics than the one performed in the Beit Dagan

project. Although the latter focused on altering official geographies, Palestinian mapmakers have to struggle against the infrastructural limitations of restricted satellite data and failing digital networks before they can worry about the specific content that is either embedded or embargoed in the map.

From the Israeli civil administrations enforced limits on GPS signal-strength throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza to the state's remand on aerial imagery of those areas, activists argued that it had become nearly impossible to process reliable mapping data online. The fact that the ostensibly independent Palestinian telecommunication firms (i.e., Paltel, Jawwal, Wataniya) remain entirely reliant on Israeli Ministry of Communication for assigning bandwidth allocation, range of signals, and the number of routers available in Palestinian areas, has further exacerbated the situation (Tawil-Souri 2012).

Given these constraints, in the next chapter, we will see how Palestine activists work to build their own DIY aerial database, filling in the gaps in the existing digital infrastructure by sharing crowdsourced data that is generated from within Palestinian communities. In contrast to the institutional state and NGO cartographies considered in this chapter, Chapter 5 examines an entirely different mode of participatory knowledge-production, one that breaks away from state cartography in favor of creating distributed GIS mappings grounded in local communities. In so doing, Chapter 5 explores how participatory mapmaking produces a new kind of base map as well as new kinds of mapping subjects in Palestine.

Chapter 5 Encoding Palestine 2.0: Mapping the Occupation

"Imagine an alien has just landed in Silwan," Noor, a GIS instructor affiliated with al-Quds university, proposed to 20 middle-school students living in an illegally annexed neighborhood of East Jerusalem. This is how a workshop on participatory mapping begins: not with lessons on legends, symbols, grids, or even handheld GPS devices, but rather with the strange figure of a Martian who has just dismounted from his spaceship in the middle of a conflict zone. "Your job," the teacher explained, "will be to create a map for this alien and help him orient himself."

What Noor does not mention – in part because it is already assumed in this classroom – is that this particular extraterrestrial has chosen a rather remarkable site to disembark. Positioned just outside the gates of the Old City and less than 20 meters away from the entrance to the al-Aqsa compound, the village of Silwan lies at the core of the "Holy Basin" surrounding Jerusalem. Due in part to its close proximity to historic and religious sites, Silwan has become a linchpin in ongoing struggles over spatial and political rights in occupied East Jerusalem. In recent years, the village has witnessed a sharp rise in violent settler incursions – which alongside a fresh wave of home demolitions – has culminated in the seizure of hundreds of Palestinian-owned properties. Police violence is likewise widespread, with plainclothes military-police units (*musta'abarin*) regularly patrolling Silwan's streets, often targeting Palestinian youth with lengthy administrative detentions and forced interrogations in the process (Sprusansky 2014). Even in the context of the relatively small-sized GIS classroom, virtually each of the 13-and-under participants had already experienced some form of police violence.

Such incidents were so frequent, in fact, that I found myself baffled by why these kids would need a map of any kind to be able to see that every road, every house, every corner shop was potentially vulnerable to police or settler attack at any moment. As an outsider, it seemed as though their very grounding in illegally annexed East Jerusalem had already provided them with an intimate grasp of the local political geography, to say nothing of the violence of state cartography writ large. What, then, was the point of engaging in a collaborative mapping project among a group of students who already seemed to know, by heart, Silwan's landscape, contours, and routes?

After witnessing a few introductory GIS lessons, I posed this question to Noor. She hurried to correct my faulty premise: "But they are *not* mapping Silwan!" she explained. "It's the *occupation* that we are mapping." This admonishment became a refrain in her interactions not only with me, but also with the students, who were repeatedly reminded that they had to visualize *al-iḥtilal,* the occupation, if they were going to be able to register its material forms.

The figure of the Martian with which Noor opened up the first lesson became representative of what emerging cartographic processes in Palestine so often aim to achieve. For, in geocoding routine encounters with occupation forces, physical closures, and Jewish settlers, the students learned to objectify erstwhile-embodied understandings of spatialized violence. At the same time, by mastering visual techniques for translating the everyday geographies of occupied Palestine into the idiom of the map, they temporarily inhabited an alien perspective, allowing them to transform the familiar into the strange and back again. In short, the GPS-bearing students ceased to be mere subjects of the occupation, instead becoming critical observers of its multi-scalar ambitions.

Noor's students were no isolated case of digital cartography or participatory GIS use in Palestine. During nearly two years of fieldwork in Bethlehem, East Jerusalem, and Haifa, I closely followed dozens of related GIS projects, designed for both children and adults. From the creation of collaboratively designed Google Earth overlays documenting depopulated villages in pre-48 Palestine to the release of the OpenStreetMaps [OSM] GPS navigation software for major cities in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Palestine's imprint on the web is increasingly more a labor of collectivity than it is an icon of national-territorial imaginings. In the course of my fieldwork, I came to see contemporary mappings as enmeshed in the act of learning to graph not only territories, but also topologies of power relations embodied in material form. In this chapter, I suggest that geomapping initiatives such as these do more than just produce new detailed maps of state violence. They also cultivate digital-geographic subjects who become, paradoxically, both more *alien*ated from and *attuned* to patterns of territorial confiscation and closure.

8. Palestine: The Map and the Territory

There is perhaps no place on earth more mapped than the narrow strip of land that lies between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The history of mapping in Palestine, however, is not just one of documenting territory. As we began to see in the last chapter, in Palestine more than anywhere else, mapping has long been a means for constructing and contesting geographic imaginaries. From the early crusaders' depiction of the Holy Land, to Napoleon's topographic survey of the region, and, later, the British Mandate's cadastral recordings of property parcels, it appears that although Europeans long imagined Palestine to be *terra nullius* (a land without a people), it was hardly *terra incognita* (an unknown land).

As Nabil Matar (1999) argues, the "Question of Palestine" was posed in the sixteenth-century, long before it would come undone in twentieth-century. When in 1570 the great renaissance cartographer Abraham Ortelius published the first modern atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum,* for instance, he notably introduced the first prototype of "Palestine." Unlike the hundreds of other diagrams included in the *Theatrum*, his chart of Palestine was unique in eliding both regional-topographical features and indigenous populations. In contrast to the other pages of Ortelius's famous work – the first scientific atlas of its kind – his cartography of Palestine depicted an imagined biblical geography of exodus-and-return (Matar 1999). In this way, the *Theatrum* not only prefigured later depictions of Palestine as a land with no inhabitants, it also twinned the birth of modern cartography with the nascence of modern Palestine (Leuenberger and Schnell 2020; Matar 1999).

By the turn of the 19th Century, a more "scientific" form of charting territory had superseded this biblical geography. When Napoleon's army touched the shores of the Holy Land in 1799, French surveyors would once again go forward like modern-day crusaders, but this time transforming Ortelius's map into one of "coastlines and terrain – a Palestine for naval and ground warfare" (Quiquivix 2012, 25). In portraying the land the staging ground for battle, this modern topography only further entrenched it as an "object to be won" (Quiquivix 2012, 25). Later-day Zionists would adopt a similar cartographic approach, and as we saw previously, deployed the "map and grab" strategy to devastating effect in the 1948 war (see Chapters 2 and 4). Time and again in Palestine, we see how territoriality took shape in the contours of the map.

The use of cartography to conquer territory continues right up through the present day. While the most significant outcome of the Oslo Accords' political geography was the sweeping cantonization of Palestinian lands in the occupied West Bank, the political agreements had other

unforeseen implications on the ground. For instance, the Oslo II cartographers used a *felt* pen to separate the West Bank into three areas of jurisdiction. In reality, the 1:20,000 scale of the map meant that the resulting borderlines comprised a five-meter-wide band of undefined space. Trapped in the width of the line, this extraterritorial area now "runs at the margins of almost every town and village…paradoxically challenging the very partition it enacts" (Hilal et al. 2013, 202). Not surprisingly, the ambiguous contour lines depicted in the "Road Map to Peace" have since become critical sites of both ongoing militarization and resistance in dozens of Palestinian communities lying adjacent to Oslo's clumsily drawn borders.

While these earlier political processes irrevocably altered the landscape, the situation on the ground today has changed in one significant respect since the collapse of the peace process in the late-1990s: Due to initiatives like the one in Silwan, cartography is no longer the exclusive purview of the state. The rise of digital and open-source GIS mapping technologies has unexpectedly made cartographers of us all. Today, the physical sites of military violence – from home demolitions to the building of the Separation Wall and the attacks on Gaza – are as likely to be produced by grassroots groups in real-time on Google Earth as they are to be recorded by state bureaucrats or reported on in the *New York Times*. But can a medium so long associated with colonial expansion ever be truly retooled for other ends?

I suggest that we should approach the potentiality of the map as neither confined nor reducible to the logic of the nation-state. This, all the more so in the age of the open-source geoweb. In contrast to the static, two-dimensional paper atlas that, for centuries, served as the handmaiden to Euro-American colonial conquests, digital renderings tend to crowd-source geographic markers rather than relying on a single map-author. The combined effect of layering widely accessible remote-sensed imaging along with user-driven distributed mapping has the

potential to reveal aggregate patterns of spatial violence that would otherwise be difficult to discern, giving users a powerful tool for "zooming in" on the architecture of occupation. At the same time, in generating a visual archive of attacks in real-time, geovisualization provides individuals with a way of "zooming out" from their own experiences, scaling up from singular episodes to the larger spatial and temporal order of violence. In other words, even as those engaged in geo-coding learn techniques for "mapping like the state," they also aim to undo the very machinations of territorial rule and violence that are historically enshrined in the cartographic enterprise.

In order to see how these new technologies alter spatial orientations on the ground, I turn below towards a more detailed ethnographic examination of how GIS mapping techniques are taken up by grassroots organizations.

9. Digital Infrastructure: Producing Spatial Knowledge

As a result of the way "GIS Palestine" interfaces between a virtually mediated environment and a de-territorialized national community, the kinds of mapping they enact encode not only space, but also the conditions of producing spatial knowledge.

From open-source and collaborative platforms, such as Open Street Maps (OSM) to aerial imagery, GIS fashions routes into the world of cartography that both exceed and challenge the demarcations laid down by occupation forces. As Jumana, a GIS trainer affiliated with a nonprofit women's group in al-Walaja, explained: "all maps create knowledge," but "OSM allows people to determine their own map," and therefore to "produce new knowledge." Jumana recalled how, in al-Walaja, the women were "so excited that they almost immediately began naming streets in the village and recoding them online." Virtually renaming space might seem like a rather small act of resistance in the grand scheme of things, but in reality, "this is

everything," she concluded. After all, it is through the process of assigning toponymy that the digital cartographers most often realize, "how disconnected from reality they feel when every road and street sign refers to names that they do not recognize." In this context, GIS Palestine projects aim not only to make visible the occupation, but also to disrupt the occupation of visuality.

The challenge, according to many of the GIS instructors I spoke with, is that alternative cartographies cannot survive as one-off inscriptions. As Jumana put it: "This [the occupation] is ongoing," with new land claims and new concomitant maps emerging almost every day, "so it will never be enough" if only you or I go do it. Rather, she added, "we need more people," more people like the DIY mappers in Silwan and al-Walaja, who will go out and "map like experts." In other words, the technological and political potentiality of GIS depends on the creation of a "community of observers."

Here as elsewhere, the rise of geovisualization platforms both presupposes and occasions the training of everyday cartographers – individuals who can tag, plot, and stitch together their respective encounters with forces of occupation along an expanding surface of mapped and lived geography.[1] Through collaboration between trained geomappers, this ongoing project can dynamically map the occupation, even as its specific manifestations changes in accordance with the security strategies of the Israeli state. But as Noor put it to her students in Silwan, before you can geocode you must first reimagine familiar sites, approaching them anew with alien eyes. In

[1] Each geotag is used for labeling metadata about location, which in combination forms linked clusters of digital data. But the specific practice of tagging sites and objects, and then inserting them into a mapped surface, "we can call the *plotting* of space." When the various processes of tagging (connecting to data), plotting (connecting to space), and tracing (connecting to time and layers) are sutured together in the mobile screen, and put into motion as a "navigable whole," a kind of *stitching* has taken place (See Verhoeff 2012).

what follows, I consider some of the geographic techniques that make it possible for individuals to make the familiar strange again while tracing a full-scale "map of the occupation."

10. Re-Territorializing Palestine: Visualizing Occupied Spaces

GIS Palestine projects are aimed at augmenting participants' ability to see and map spatial violence. In the context of youth mappings in Silwan, this process was accomplished using a number of related pedagogical exercises, which were geared less towards instilling cartographic knowledge than to developing the students' perceptual acuity and awareness of the built environment. Noor and the other instructors therefore dedicated a large chunk of the lesson plan to refining participants' spatial vocabularies. The pedagogues opened the GIS sessions, for example, by giving students a list of various sites, features, and events that could potentially be coded in real-time, using handheld GPS devices. These included geocodes for denoting neighborhood closures and sites of home demolitions, as well as for cataloging run-ins with settler groups and military police. The input labels, in turn, transformed even the most routine encounter with the built environment into a "codeable" activity.

By immersing students in the cartographic register and its technical language for ordering urban relations, participants learned to discursively "mark-up" the built environment, even before they began doing so with actual GPS units. Showing them pictures taken from the area surrounding Wadi Hilwe in Silwan, for instance, Noor would quiz the workshop, "well, what do we have here that can be tagged?" As the participants inspected the 4x6 images, they were instructed to identify those visible structures that were potentially "codeable" – from the presence of a private security firm's car parked on the street to the graffiti of the Star of David on a street sign and the barbed wire visible on the outskirts of settler-confiscated property. In these

preliminary exercises, the goal was never merely to impart specialized know-how of geographic techniques, but rather to enable participants to "see in a different way." In practice, these exercises oriented students to the visible signs of occupation which were otherwise in danger of fading into the background of their day-to-day routines.

In the world of traditional map theory, the cartographer begins with a bird's-eye vision of the landscape, selectively translating the vista into coordinates on the gird. GIS mappings turns this model on its head. Students do not begin in the field, but in the classroom. Their lessons do not start with a survey, but with a word list. Before a single geo-tag is inputted, participants inhabit the grammar of the cartographic, internalizing its language of "geotags," "placemarks," "features," and "attributes." Here, the territory does not precede the map; rather, mapping becomes the condition of possibility for evoking territoriality.

Only once the GIS instructors had primed students to identify physical signs of the occupation did they move on to the actual practice of mapping, which included organizing fieldtrips and distributing handheld GPS units. Facing a shortage of devices, however, GIS Palestine classrooms often relied on improvised methods. Noor's strategy was to pair up kids from the workshop, requiring them to work in tandem: one student would take the role of "observer" – tasked with being the "eyes"– while the other took notes and inputted geo-data. Noor's method also neatly schematized the two-fold process of GIS mapping. First, geomappers must learn to see the landscape as populated with phenomena that should be mapped. Only after recognizing it, can they engage in the technical work of producing, graphing, and annotating geographic data.

When successful, this specialized training in how to use GIS devices produces more than just new maps; by honing participants' "cartographic gaze," it also provides a technical and

social scaffolding for vision itself. As students went through the process of mapping in pairs, they helped socialize each other's sight by drawing their partner's attention to some otherwise unremarkable landscape feature, pulling them into a spatial dialogue about the very sites being plotted. In these instances, the GPS device itself became a crucial actor in the story. As one member of an earlier GIS Palestine project, Fadi, reflected on the experience: "Now when something happens, almost my first thought is: okay, I need to tag this!" For Fadi, there was a direct connection between this kind of technical intervention and the attunement of perception. As he put it, "I look around now, and even when I'm seeing all the same things happening, you just sort of notice *more*." In other words, while the process of real-time tracking may not necessarily produce "new" knowledge about the unfolding spaces and experiences of settler-colonialism, it *does* provide a mode of visualizing its concrete inscriptions. So, nothing has changed, and yet we "notice more." By objectifying spatial knowledge and disciplining sight, mapping renders the familiar strange, and makes visible things that might otherwise have been overlooked.

The GIS trainings not only instilled participants with an appreciation for the tangible and material identifiers of *al-iḥtilal*; it also oriented them to the gaps, absences, and omissions built into the construction of Palestinian spaces. In one instance, a few kids in the Silwan workshop complained that the dearth of useable parks anywhere near their homes rendered the geocode for "green spaces" irrelevant. Overhearing this, Noor praised them for picking up on a subtle, but important issue, while proceeding to encourage the students to pay even greater attention to what else was missing from the surrounding area – sidewalks, clinics, kindergartens, transportation hubs, and more. Here, the question became not "what *can* we code?" but rather, "what *should* we be able to code that we cannot because it does not exist?"

Even when the map failed to capture the totality of the occupation, the mapping subject could still glean critical insight into its machinations by attempting to trace the uneven geography of Silwan. Only a few months after the GIS workshop, the Jerusalem municipality announced a new round of demolition orders in the al-Bustan quarter of Silwan, designed to "clear" the area for a new "biblical park," known as the "King's Garden." However, as several of the GIS Palestine workshop participants would come to note: the struggle over both private homes and public spaces revealed an inherent limitation of the map. While there were plenty of ways to code demolitions and even more methods for marking up plans for future green spaces, there was no easy method of georeferencing the way these two features interwove in the occupation of Silwan. Nor was there an obvious tag for capturing information about missing infrastructure, settler-run bus lines, or the public kindergarten serving Jewish residents only. Yet even as they ran up against the inherent limitations of using set digital labels to capture the complexities of the occupation, the transformation in participants' capacity to perceive the violence embedded in the presences and absences of the landscape could be traced back to the skills acquired in working with GIS technologies.

Despite these shortcomings, Palestinians who had gone through GIS trainings deemed the very practice of observing the making and unmaking of these structures, in itself, a worthwhile aspect of the project. To understand why this might be the case, it is helpful to consider the way cartography enables GIS participants to graph not only territorial relations, but also their underlying social, political, and material substrates.

11. Encoding Infrastructure: A Cartography of Networked Violence

Part of what GIS enables is a way of visualizing state violence as a geographer might – that is, from above and from below, in data and clusters, in presences and absences. Yet the occupation of Palestine manifests not just through walls, buildings, and visible structures, but also through often-unseen water pipelines, sewage treatment plants, and other non-virtual infrastructural networks. While infrastructure facilitates the flow of people and objects, forming the groundwork of everyday life, it also provides a means of materializing the state's strategy of displacement through the subtle neglect of territory (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; Larkin 2013; P. Harvey, Jensen, and Morita 2016; Graham and McFarlane 2014; T. Mitchell 2014).

Precisely because of way the state casts its shadow over the regulation of urban systems, mapping infrastructural nodes provides yet another window into the construction and maintenance of the occupation. During one field trip, for example, I noticed that two girls had fallen behind. After jogging back to grab the stragglers, I asked the duo to explain what was so interesting as to make them forget the rest of the group. "The trash [*al-zbaleh*]," the half-bemused, half-exasperated girls explained. *Zbaleh?* "Look [*shufi*]!" the oldest gestured from her notebook towards a pile of strewn shopping bags, discarded candy wrappers, and empty plastic bottles. Here, the younger girl chimed in as well, playfully suggesting we could rename the area "Wadi al-Zbaleh" (the valley of trash) instead of Wadi Hilwe (beautiful valley).[2] Having

[2] When I related this conversation to a few of the older volunteers at the youth center, they pointed out that there was a historical kernel to the joke. The gate leading out to Silwan from the southern-wall of the al-Aqsa compound, which is now known as either the Mughrabi Gate or Dung Gate, was once called "*Bab al-Zbaleh*," since this is where trash would have been chucked out by the tannery owners of the Old City. The name "Wadi Hilwe," they speculated, was perhaps adopted in response to this historical practice of waste management.

encoded the pile of trash on their handheld GIS devices, we continued up the hill to rejoin the rest of the group.

In theory, I had no reason to be surprised. "Litter," after all, was one of the key tags we reviewed during an earlier GIS session – and, thanks to the dilapidated waste management system, there was plenty of it around to code. Nevertheless, after several months of living with sporadic-or-nonexistent infrastructure, I, like the students, had largely grown so accustomed to the pieces of *zbaleh* jutting out from the road that I hardly noted its presence. For the girls, by contrast, the GIS training had brought these long-discarded items into view. Like auto-focus but with a twist: *the objects were transformed into graspable data points,* now deployed as meaningful coordinates in the mapping of derelict infrastructure and rule.

In this instance, cartography not only provided a medium for ordering the built environment, it also reworked the nature of the things being graphed. As scholars of trash culture point out, there is nothing "natural" or obvious about what counts as waste (Strasser 1999). After all, Mary Douglas reminds us, dirt only becomes "dirty" when it is figured as "matter out of place" (M. Douglas 1966). Shoes, for example, are not in themselves unclean, but when placed next to food they become dirty. Likewise, in the urban built environment, an empty coke bottle placed inside a public waste bin is essentially clean, *ndif*. So too the debris one has grown habituated to overlooking. But when the same object, now left on the street or placed in a burning dumpster emitting smoky fumes, is re-coded as "litter," it becomes the stuff of rubbish. This newly identified matter out of place, in turn, becomes an index of the broader infrastructural violence wrought by the occupation.

As Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins (2019; 2011) demonstrates in her research on waste management politics in Palestine, the kinds of expendable items that now appear as refuse are

themselves byproducts of the recent material history of settler-colonialism. It was only "with the closure of the West Bank," as local industries fell into ruin, that Palestinian households began buying most goods "cheaply from further afield," importing the plastic wares now discarded haphazardly on the ground (S. Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2011, 62). For DIY mapmakers, encoding trash brought into stark relief these otherwise invisible infrastructural histories.

While grappling with residues and traces of disposable objects opens up one pathway into the making of everyday space, mapping their physical presence leads to another entry point into the occupation. From a cartographic standpoint, the pursuit of "sorting the dirty from the clean" involves a systematic process of organizing, ranking, labeling, and classifying spatial attributes. Hence, in the context of GIS Palestine, the "worthless" garbage of the street gains new value by virtue of its inclusion as calculable, quantifiable, and mappable indices of a neglectful regime – ultimately, pointing more to the dirty politics of the Israeli occupation than to the politics of dirt *per se.*

In mapping the material networks undergirding this militarized terrain, GIS transforms the way individuals relate to the built environment on at least two levels. On the one hand, by situating these observations within a platform that tracks and aggregates geodetic information, GIS mapping can reveal clusters and patterns rather than just individual data points. In so doing, this new technology allows the mapmaker to place her individual experiences within a larger scalar order of violence. Whereas prior to the workshop, GIS participants encountered the occupation on a visceral level, these cartographic exercises enabled them to "scale up." Through a systematic mapping of built forms, participants learn to see the ways their personal experience of occupation fit into larger spatial and ultimately national patterns of abuse. On the other hand, this experimental dimension of geo-coding transformed the entire city into an urban laboratory

for investigating the conditions of military rule. Subjects learned to monitor, measure, and report on everything from trash and environmental hazards to army barriers and demolitions, and in the process, they gained embodied knowledge of the occupation's materialization in space. This fostered a kind of analysis "on the move," forged on foot, and refined through exploring, observing, and charting Palestine's fractured geography. In what follows, I examine how bodily practices and policing during mapping exercises further opens up (or forecloses) certain routes into the constructed space of occupied East Jerusalem.

12. Mobility in Palestine: Bodies, Space, and Movement

Mapping is not just about a cognitive and spatial mastery of routes, layouts, and built forms. In Palestine, the process of surveying is also tactile and embodied. In a context where constraints on movement are the norm, the ambulatory methods honed by mobile digital cartographies form a kind of bulwark against the occupation's tendency towards territorial fragmentation. Here, walking and drawing become what Mauss (1973) calls "techniques of the body," fashioning knowledge in the course of technical activities which are in themselves learned and collective.

Not surprisingly, for many of the young Palestinian "neogeographers" (Goodchild 2009), the pleasure of mapping had much more to do with the path than the destination. "I feel most free when I'm out in the field, just walking about," Dawoud, a part-time surveyor as well as GIS instructor, explained when I asked him what drew him to map-making. In *Palestinian Walks* (2007), Raja Shehadeh evokes a similar kind of pleasure from going on *sarha,* an unencumbered peregrination where one would, "roam freely, at will, without restraint." But as Shehadeh reminds us, "not any excursion would qualify as a *sarha*. Going on a *sarha* implies letting go. It

is a drug-free high, Palestinian style" (Shehadeh 2007, 2). For Shehadeh, the *sarha* is a bodily technique that connects the walker to the territory, binding the two through an embodied experience.

To the extent that GIS Palestine projects gesture to a mental and physical openness to the landscape, they do so through cultivating a habitus of peripatetic exploration, employing the body itself as an instrument of geographic investigation. In this sense, going "into the field" becomes one of the key techniques for sedimenting "knowledge of a territory inside a conscience" (Gola, Perugini, and Harb 2010, 60). These incursions, however, are not without danger or impediment. At times, this is "knowledge gained by the skin of one's teeth, un-comfortably and in fear" (Bishara 2015, 43), such as in moments when surveying bodies get caught up in police barricades or themselves become subject to the surveillance of occupation forces.

CLOSURES: IMMOBILE SUBJECTS, MOBILE KNOWLEDGE

While the act of mapping aimed to solidify a wayfaring sensibility, the feeling of unrestricted movement was often fleeting, and ultimately subject to the same erected barriers that marked all other spheres of life activity. Hence, even as he spoke of the precarious joy he sometimes felt surveying the landscape, Dawoud was quick to recall how the reality of the occupation had upended a recent fieldtrip he had organized for a GIS group from al-Quds University to a village near Ramallah. "It was beautiful, and the students had a great time just learning and walking about [the village of] Turmusayya," until on the way home, an unexpected road barricade blocked the group's passage. "Suddenly, we realized that the army had shut down all the main streets in and out from Jerusalem," he explained. With occupation forces severing

East Jerusalem from its urban arteries, Dawoud and the other cartographers-in-training found themselves stranded.

The irony, Dawoud pointed out, was that even as he was trying to give the students a geographic compass and sense of territorial mooring: "in that moment, I felt completely lost, like I didn't know where I was going or what I was supposed to do." So, after more than an hour of suspended waiting, Dawoud resolved to query one of the nearby army officers. "That's when I had a real shock," as the soldier brusquely informed him that the road closure was in honor of '*Yom Yerushaliym'* [Jerusalem Day], a Jewish day of celebration marking the city's "reunification," as the Israeli state refers to its annexation of East Jerusalem after 1967. Access to the streets, he explained, was restricted due to "public safety concerns." While the absurdity of the situation was not lost on Dawoud ("How can you claim to be 'unified' when you have to cut off half the city in order to feel safe?"), what most unnerved him was the way it had shattered the transient illusion of freedom and mobility achieved during the surveying trek.

OPENINGS: THE SOCIALITY OF COLLECTIVE MAPPINGS

Even as GIS projects brought participants into contact with spatial blockages – closures, cracks, debris, and barbed wires – the practice of mobile mapping still held out the potential for opening up certain flows of bodily engagement and sociability. In Silwan, for example, older Palestinian residents described the pride they felt in seeing the contingent of makeshift cartographers trotting about with funny-looking gadgets, visibly claiming and mapping *their* streets. Here, the mapmakers were not merely a source of interesting curiosity. Rather, they figured as embodied proof of an ongoing practice of *sumudness*, of steadfastness, and resistance of the logics of the occupation.

In a similar vein, mapping exercises often occasioned the exchange of spatial knowledge among participants, neighbors, and relatives. Along with increased recognition from friends and neighbors alike, inculcation in the language of GIS lent a marked sense of purposefulness to the students' urban saunter. While tagging the location of barriers installed near the largest of the archeological digs in Silwan, for example, a Palestinian kiosk owner who was drawn to group after spotting the GPS devices in the hands of the students, eagerly jumped in to share bits of information he had gleaned from the vantage point of his small storefront. Facing out towards the pit at various times of the day and night, he explained that he had witnessed the settler-run team carelessly discarding a number of important, Islamic artifacts. Returning once again to trash talk, the kiosk owner told the assembled students: "If they think it's Jewish, it'll get stored in the compound [the City of David complex]. But when they find something from the Mamluk days, they treat it all like *zbaleh!*"[3] The GIS mappers were intrigued – did he have other stories about what lay beneath, they wanted to know. Leaning in, the kiosk owner chronicled in a low voice the tale of how fighters in '67 had burrowed inside the dark tunnels that used to connect the village to the spring pool at the top of the hill. The water, he added, was known to be restorative, but its more magical properties disappeared after the settler group had seized the spring. As the students listened, enraptured by this recounting of Silwan's subterranean past, it became clear that the physical act of mapping closures had opened up an interactional platform for piecing together other kinds of spatial knowledge.

[3] It should be noted that critical archeologists from the Jewish-Israeli group *Emek Shaveh* likewise argue that the site, which is financed by the Elad organization, whose sole interest lies in unearthing a "Jewish past," does not follow any accepted guidelines of international archeological methods (Abu El-Haj 2001; Beinin 2010; Mizrachi 2013; Pullan 2013).

Even residents who were, in the first instance, wary of the project, often grew visibly excited when students asked for their help in charting Silwan's manifold nooks and crannies. In one instance, an elderly resident, who had been dubious of the young *shabab* parading about with odd-looking technologies of surveillance, demanded to know why they were carrying "walkie-talkies" (the GPS unit looks a lot like handheld receivers often used by the military police). While the kids were invariably polite, they also asserted surprising confidence in these moments. Having been trained to see the village through the "eyes of experts," they could code themselves as capable surveyors, explaining in a serious tone that they were gathering an important record of *al-iḥtilal*. In this case, the technocratic idiom of GIS provided a way for participants to perform themselves as semi-authorized experts, reclaiming their vested right to the city.

Despite the evanescent sensations of mobility and expertise cultivated through these cartographic exercises, most GIS participants are aware of the potential dangers involved in attempting to map spaces under occupation. In what follows, I look at how the recognition and management of risk shapes the content of these cartographic engagement.

13. Averting Risk: Navigating Danger and Bodily Vulnerabilities

While geo-coding – unlike aerial DIY projects – is not technically illegal under Israeli military rule, the act of walking with a handheld GPS unit can draw all sorts of attention, some of which might be unwanted. During one of Noor's first experiments with using GPS-units in a field-based setting, she had inadvertently led a small group towards the settler-run "City of David" complex on a day when the organization was hosting a large, international conference at

the site. As a result, the military police were out in force, patrolling up and down the hilly streets of Wadi Hilwe. Realizing that the little geo-coding coterie, walking with their GPS units in hand, would attract suspicion, Noor recalled experiencing a flash of panic. Acting quickly and on instinct, she managed to turn the students around, thankfully enabling the group to get back to the youth center unharmed. While they successfully dodged the encounter with military police on that occasion, the incident was never far from Noor's mind when planning outdoor excursions.

Every GIS instructor I spoke with reiterated the need to remain vigilant and aware of potential repercussions whenever anyone engaged in mapping activities in Palestine. As one aerial photographer put it: when you are working in a highly militarized area, you always wonder about what will happen if the authorities, "notice some activity that looks a bit strange" or even just happen to "see cameras and stop us." Nor does the fear terminate after the mapping workshop ends. In this regard, activists often raised the concerns about what would happen if the "army realizes what we're doing," and then they go searching home-to-home, "thinking that we are collecting all kinds of state secrets?"

These questions were hardly hypothetical in nature. Palestinian cartographers affiliated with a number of local NGOs recalled instances in which soldiers at checkpoints had summarily confiscated their cameras, erased data from on-site servers, and even arrested surveyors in the field. No one I interviewed believed that they were ever entirely free of the machinations of military oversight or detention. Indeed, the director of the Wadi Hilwe Center himself had been detained several times without charge, in what residents widely interpreted as reprisals for his activism and work on other community initiatives.

Given this context, the Silwan Youth Center focused on developing bodily tactics for shielding mobile geo-coding students from the potentially menacing gaze of settlers and the

police. On particularly tense days, instructors advised students to simply leave the GPS units behind, as settlers or soldiers would doubtless interpret the visible presence of mapping tools as a provocation. In these moments, they directed participants to jot down their observations in notebooks and only retroactively input data using virtual place-markers corresponding to approximate locations marked in their notebooks. At other times, GPS devices were discretely tucked into cell phone cases and pencil holders to hide them from prying eyes.

Yet even in the face of these restrictive circumstances and sometimes-perilous conditions, GIS training sessions rarely had trouble filling their rosters. Moreover, when pedagogues consulted with parents and other residents of Silwan about a new aerial mapping initiative, which technically ran up against military restrictions on capturing images from the sky, community members overwhelmingly argued in favor of the project. Despite the legal gray-zone surrounding this considerably riskier aerial imaging venture, residents claimed they had the right to shoot bird's-eye recordings of their own neighborhood. As one of instructors involved in the project summed up the feeling at the meeting: "The geography does not belong to them. No one can tell us when, where, or how it can be mapped."

Once again, however, the GIS activists and trainers involved in the aerial imaging project worked diligently to limit the group's bodily exposure before heeding to the residents call to proceed with the initiative. Choosing to attach the digital cameras to pouches sewn into brightly colored kites, the instructors camouflaged both the map-making subject and their technical-prosthetics devices. In the end, the kites blended seamlessly with the windy Jerusalem air and provided participants with a surprisingly fun-yet-inconspicuous method for recording high-quality aerial imagery. In repossessing the sky, residents also reclaimed the right to be able to see and map lived space, not just *in situ*, but from above.

14. CODA

In the opening line to a famous journal entitled, "What is a Homeland?" the Palestinian poet laureate Mahmoud Darwish offers the following response to this pressing question: "*The Map is Not the Answer*" (Darwish 2012, 19). By riffing off Alfred Korzybski's famous dictum, "The Map is Not the Territory" (Korzybski 1958, 58), Darwish calls on the reader to be wary of mistaking reality for its representation. Like the citizens of Borges's (1946) imaginary Empire, Darwish appears to forswear the geographer's promised land. But we must understand Darwish's admonishment to separate Palestine's iconography from its lived reality in the context of the post-Nakba era – where images and mementos of a lost homeland so often circulate *in lieu of* a physical return to the sites of dispossession. This, Darwish declares, will not do: the "the map does not constitute an answer, because it is very much like an abstract painting. And your grandfather's grave is not the answer because a small forest can make it disappear" (Darwish 2012, 19–20). Despite his seeming rejection of cartographic rationality, Darwish's own literary work remains rife with mapping references all sorts. "Our country / has the map of absence," he writes in a poem unraveling his estrangement from the remade landscape of Palestine after 1948, and as a result, "I become distant from my epoch / When I approach the place's topography" (Quoted in Antoon 2008, 220–24). In another well-known selection, "Passport," he asks: "Where should we go after the last border?" (Darwish 2003, 9). And finally, writing shortly after the massacre of Sabra and Shatilla, Darwish collaborated on a volume titled: "I am a victim of the map" (Al-Qasim and Darwish 2005)

Like so many of the individuals I worked with, Darwish is compelled to return – again and again – to Palestine's charted terrain. Darwish's seemingly contradictory view of the map – as at once an object of suspicion that threatens to doubly dislocate refugees from memories of the

"real" thing, while at the same time providing a visual medium for conjuring and imaging a future "homeland" – speaks to a tension that lies at the heart of the cartographic enterprise in contemporary Palestine. Mapping always, simultaneously, tracks exile as much as belonging, dislocation as much as emplacement.

For this reason, the map-object tends to take on a life of its own – providing a means for not only spatializing Palestine's past and present, but also for forging its future geo-body. Hence, in examining the work that maps do in the world, my focus has not been primarily on the logic of cartography but rather the bodily praxis and spatial horizons enabled in the practice of graphing Palestine's occupation. While I agree with Darwish that the map is not the *answer*, I suggest that it might nevertheless provide a critical medium for *questioning* the construction of space, politics, and homeland post-1948.

In this sense, cartography can pave critical pathways into the visual construction of everyday life in Israel-Palestine, furnishing a kind of tangible knowledge that is ultimately connected to both "political structures and broader habituses that are not easy to translate" (Bishara 2015, 49). It can also, therefore, be a useful technique for thinking "up and across" scalar and infrastructural levels, enabling individuals to frame their experience of territorial discontinuity within the larger context of military rule. Walid, an architect from Haifa who also occasionally participated in GIS workshops, offered this prescient remark on what initially drew him to cartography and the scopic power of the map: "I really started paying attention [to maps] when B'Tselem published a series on the [separation] wall. We had talked about the wall, protested the wall, everything." The problem, he explained, was that: "we would be talking about it, but somehow I couldn't imagine it. I just could not *picture* it." Until, "I saw the B'Tselem map, and it was like, a-ha! *That* is what a map can do. It can show you not just what things are

like now, but what's coming, too." Still, I couldn't help asking: how does it help to "know what's coming," if it doesn't stop it from happening? The B'Tselem map, after all, was no match for the Separation Wall. "Okay, yes, it didn't stop the Wall," Walid conceded, but then added: "Maybe if we had more information, more Israeli plans and maps back then, maybe more could have done? It would have been easier to stop them building it then it will be to bring it down. So yeah, I think we need *more*…we need to track every new development, put it all on the map, on the internet, everywhere."

It should be noted that whether, in reality, the solution lies in generating more and better maps was certainly not a point of universal agreement. Among Walid's own circle of friends and relatives, for example, his 20-year-old cousin appeared much more skeptical of the whole mapping enterprise. In part due to his age, Faris had a much hazier recollection of "the time before the wall," and this gave him a very different vantage point: "It's funny. You talk about how hard it was to picture what it was going to be like once people in Bethlehem were cut off from Jerusalem. But actually, my problem is that I can't imagine it any other way. Why am I supposed to care about a human rights map that just shows me something I have to see every day?" Later, Faris mocked his cousin: "I already know where the wall is, thanks."

In this disagreement over the significance of humanitarian mappings of the wall that bifurcated two historically interconnected Palestinian cities, we see the tension between different cartographic imaginations at work. Whereas Walid wished to map the ongoing conditions of territorial rule, his cousin yearned for a future imaginary in which such documentation would no longer be necessary.

In the everyday practice of GIS cartography, participants end up negotiating between the dueling impulses to chart both the real, "present conditions" of territorial rule (as advocated by

Walid) as well a future imaginary of an un-occupied Palestinian landscape (as desired by Faris). In so doing, participatory GIS holds out a two-fold promise. On the one hand, it proffers to reveal latent patterns of state violence enfolded in the regulation of Palestine's built environment. This, it does through the training geocoding subjects, who learn to see in a different mode, visualizing the presence of the occupation in the very material construction of both real and virtual networks. In this way, open-source maps work to undermine the infrastructures of visibility that have, historically, reduced Palestine to terra nullius. On the other hand, GIS does not merely constitute a representation of the world as such. Recall, after all, that like the alien who landed in Silwan on the first day of the workshop, GIS participants learn techniques for conjuring a familiar landscape-made-strange when perceived anew through the lens of the GPS device. For this reason, its true potential lies in its capacity to rewrite our habituated routes into territory – enabling users to map not just territory, but also the occupation. In the process of collaborative mapping, then, GIS attempts not only to "write territory" [*geo-graphy*], but also to "right territory," to redress the forms of territorial injury enacted in the decades since the illegal annexation East Jerusalem and the occupation of Palestinian territories.

For a new generation of young Palestinian activists, however, mapping the occupation and documenting Israeli human rights abuses increasingly feels like only the first step on the long road to seeking redress. As discussed in Chapter 1, after decades of waiting for the international community and human rights organizations to either curtail Israel's military occupation or advance the rights of refugees, young Palestinians have grown disenchanted with existing models of rights-based organizing. Instead, these activists have turned to an organizing framework that is not tied to a positivist and abstract understanding of human rights. Rather, in moving towards a model based on the "right to the city," activists refocus their political energy

on transforming the material bedrock from which rights might flourish, embodied in the everyday politics of buildings, roads, buses, closures, walls, and public spaces.

In the next chapter, we'll see how activists working in this mold deploy the tools of urban planning – including architectural designs, blueprints, and town plans – in order to realize Palestinian spatial rights in a locally specific yet scalable manner.

Chapter 6: Planning the Future: Modeling Refugee Return in Palestine/Israel

> "In one minute, the entire life of a house is ended. The house as causality is also a mass murder, even if it is empty of its inhabitants. A mass grave of raw materials intended to build a structure with a meaning, or a poem of no importance in a time of war…" Mahmoud Darwish, *The Murdered House*

In the preceding chapters we tracked the ways in which Israeli planning, mapping, and building methods underwrite the state's territorial claims while concealing the ongoing destruction of Palestinian built forms. In the words of Theodor Herzl, one of the architects of modern Zionism: "Whoever is interested in erecting a new building must first demolish the old one" (Herzl 1902, 38). As we saw in Chapter 2, Herzl's trope of obliterating physical sites to make way for the new was not just the stuff of rhetoric; from 1948 to 1951, and again between 1967-1973, the Israeli state bulldozed over a quarter-million Palestinian residential and community structures in scores of depopulated villages. Along with authorizing mass demolitions, Chapters 3 and 4 detailed how Israeli officials enlisted architects and planners to conclude the war against Palestine's built environment by other means.

Given the role of state planning in formalizing the dispossession of over 750,000 Palestinian refugees, it might seem puzzling that Israeli and Palestinian activists have turned to – of all things – urban planning tools in their pursuit of the right of return. However, as we saw hints of in the preceding chapters, Israeli and Palestinian activists have usurped a number of other technocratic fields as a means of pressing their claims against the Israeli state. In Chapter 3, we saw how the NGO Zochrot repurposed the *tiyul* – a model of nationalist hiking – in order to recalibrate participants' faculty of sight, allowing them to apprehend traces of the 1948 Nakba

that persist within the Israeli landscape. Along with redeploying the *tiyul*, Chapter 4 delved into Zochrot's recycling of censored map-objects such as the post-1948 *Harus* series, arguing that state censorship regimes always leave behind telltale markers that can be hacked by activist counter-mappers. Extending this argument to the digital front, Chapter 5 looked at how Palestinian activists disputed official state maps by crowdsourcing their own informal, DIY virtual cartographies of occupied spaces.

While activists marshalled these insurgent technocracies to oppose specific aspects of Israeli spatial politics – from the erasure of Palestine's built environment to its censorship in the archives as well as the digital elision of Palestinian geography on the internet – none of these strategies scaled up to the national level in a manner that could challenge the core premise of exclusionary state-building. By contrast, in this chapter, we will see how urban planning methodologies are uniquely well-situated for developing a locally specific yet scalable alternative to the Israeli masterplan.

In trying to understand the rise of urbanist planning tactics in Israel-Palestine, this chapter will examine how activists appropriate the state's own language of planning in order to protest the material exigencies of displacement and occupation. In the process, I argue that Palestinian urban activists enact a mode of political claim-making that extends beyond the traditional sphere of abstract, legal rights to the concrete realm of buildings, houses, roads, and infrastructure.

1. Introduction: Planning the Future, Today.

I first observed the affinities between urban planning and refugee rights in Palestine-Israel while working with internally displaced persons (IDPs) from al-Ruways. As introduced in

Chapter 1, al-Ruways was a vibrant community in the western Galilee, until July of 1948, when Haganah militias laid siege to the village and expelled its inhabitants (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Temporary sign for al-Ruways cemetery during Land Day, 2013. Credit: M. Ran-Rubin.

While the story of al-Ruways shares much in common with the hundreds of other Palestinian villages depopulated in 1948, it differs in one important respect: the 330 residents of al-Ruways succeeded, against the odds, in keeping their small community relatively intact and within close proximity to their village's agricultural borders. While many of the residents displaced from al-Ruways found temporary housing in the nearby development town of Tamra, located mere meters from their ancestral village, the IDF continued to block their access to the homes, cemetery, school building, and orchards left behind in al-Ruways. By 1950, the IDF had demolished the remaining structures in an attempt to forestall the return of refugees.

Like other Palestinians who found themselves on the Israeli-side of the newly drawn Green Line, in the wake of the Nakba, the villagers of al-Ruways became internally displaced persons within Israel. As we saw in Chapter 2, the IDF enforced marital law over displaced Palestinians residing in development towns such as Tamra, which is where the army had

confined villagers from al-Ruways, Mi'ar, and Yajur. Military rule began with the installation of a "military governor" in the Galilee and extended to widespread restrictions on movement between Palestinian localities (limited only to IDF-approved permit holders) as well as the imposition of arbitrary curfews and the classification of depopulated villages as "security areas" (S. Robinson 2013). As one interlocutor put it when describing the years of martial law: "Every day I could see [al-Ruways] from my window, I could almost touch it, but they would never let us enter it." Other villagers recalled waiting in long lines for soldiers to issue the annual two-week harvest permits so they could pick olives in their families' historic orchards. Even as IDPs yearned to return to al-Ruways, the Israeli legislature sanctioned the seizure of their lands by classifying them – as well as the majority of those who had been temporarily uprooted – as "present absentee" landowners, thereby granting the state full control over confiscated refugee property (see Chapter 2).

Today, the ruins of al-Ruways lie not more than 800 meters away from the city of Tamra, where almost all of the IDPs from the village now reside. Although IDPs are no longer subject to the harsh strictures of military rule, they still contend with discriminatory legal and spatial policies that bar their return to the ancestral village (Adalah 2010; 2003; Boqa'i 2008).While residents are now allowed to visit the remnants of their village – and indeed, most do so on a weekly, even daily, basis – Israeli land regulations prohibit the transfer of ownership back to Palestinian communities. Return appears as remote today as it was in 1948.[1]

[1] In public discourse, the official Israeli state opposition to the right of the return is most often phrased as a matter of demographic fears of mass Palestinian immigration and the concomitant dilution of the state's "Jewish majority." In the case of al-Ruways however, such concerns are moot: the refugees in Tamra are already, at least *de jure*, citizens of the state. Nor is this a matter of insufficient land

That was, until quite recently. In May of 2012, I received an unexpected phone call from the head of the al-Ruways Refugee Committee, Fadi, who explained that he was preparing to ask the village's council to develop an alternative master plan for the site. I had met Fadi during a Land Day commemoration the previous year, and we had since exchanged a few ideas over email about how to obtain pre-1948 village records in the state archives. But Fadi didn't simply want to amass a local archive of the village's past; he wanted to lay the groundwork for envisioning its future. With this objective in mind, Fadi asked if I could make time to participate in the preliminary planning process, hopefully contributing as much archival research as I could successfully retrieve on the group's behalf.

At first, Fadi's request seemed to put the horse before cart. While the refugee committee produced a thorough, detail-oriented blueprint for a future al-Ruways, their plans still had to overcome the Israeli state's refusal to allow IDPs' access to their ancestral villages or to zone depopulated parcels for new building constructions. In recent years, the state had even criminalized Palestinian-led commemorations held on village lands. In this context, I wondered, how can we understand the role of alternative planning models, which depict a spatial future for returning refugees that looks nothing like the current conditions on the ground? Several members of the committee posed similar questions to Fadi, prodding him to explain why putting resources

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resources; after all, the whole reason Fadi successfully orchestrated the limited transfer was because the ILA never deemed the tract worthy of planning. The al-Ruways case clarifies that there is something else at work in the denial of refugee return, and the spatial regulation of Palestinian populations, then just simple territorial or demographic statecraft.

into this project – which admittedly would be hard to realize in the near future – was the best use of the group's scarce funds?

But Fadi's enthusiasm was contagious. Within a few short weeks, the idea of drafting a blueprint of return for al-Ruways took shape through a series of community planning sessions, youth group meetings, and informal conversations with residents of Tamra. As the project garnered interest from other displaced communities in the region, including the nearby village of Mi'ar, Fadi sought resources from two local NGOs, Baladna and Zochrot, to help build a durable database of alternative master plans. No one seemed especially concerned that the resulting blueprints might not come to fruition in the immediate-near future.

To outsiders, these efforts to plan for a future whose foundations had not yet been secured might, at least on first blush, look quixotic. And yet, during this time period, similar refugee-led planning projects sprung up across dozens of other IDP communities located within the Green Lin, including: al-Lajjun, 'Iqrit, Mishka, Kufr Bir'am, Mi'ar, Malul, al-Ghabisiya, and Saffuriyya, among others (Wakim 2001; Jamal 2005; Wiles 2015; F. Jiryis 2012; Esmeir 2014). This, notwithstanding the fact that the lands of these villages remained under Israeli state control and surveillance. How, then, can we understand the impetus behind this movement for planning future spaces that, at present, did not exist as a material reality on the ground?

POST-OSLO: BUILDING FUTURES ON THE RUINS OF THE PAST

The participatory, refugee-led planning projects I analyze in this chapter took place between 2012-2015, during a particularly trying political juncture in the history of Palestine-Israel. This was a period wrought by the 1993 Oslo Accord's dual failure to institute substantive protections for Palestinian human rights or prevent Israel's cantonization of Palestinian lands. Instead, Oslo offered the empty promise of Palestinian state-building in lieu of guaranteeing the

conditions for territorial sovereignty. As a result, the 1993 agreement transformed the Palestinian National Authority [PA] into a "quasi-state," charged with policing Palestinians living under occupation, but otherwise lacking either the legitimacy or the capacity to govern (Allen 2013, 74). In addition to growing concerns about the PA's leadership in the West Bank, their refusal to recognize Hamas's electoral success in Gaza forged a still wider breech in the Palestinian political scene. In sum: this was a moment when Palestinian nationalist politics had become not only fragmented, but also unmoored from the kinds of day-to-day struggles facing the displaced Palestinians communities from villages like al-Ruways.

Alongside the collapse of older modes of nationalist politics, the planning projects I observed also reflected and responded to a growing sense of doubt about the prospect of realizing rights or seeking justice for Palestinian refugees through existing legal or political orders. As the anthropologist Lori Allen (2013) demonstrates in her account of the human rights regime in Palestine, the belief that many refugees once held that international legal bodies or instruments could be wielded to check Israel's expansive military occupation has long since given way to an outlook of cynicism. In this context, cynicism is not merely a negative disposition towards the future. Rather, it embodies a political praxis and sensibility fashioned out of the current stasis, that as Allen puts it, reflects a, "critical stance by which those who are displeased with choices available in the present hold on to the belief that such limited options are not all that there should be" (2013, 189).

While this cynical orientation to politics left most activists in Israel-Palestine disillusioned with the promises of both international actors and local governments, it has also opened up a space for experimenting with alternative models of organizing for collective rights. As Yousef Jabareen, an urban planner and refugee from al-Lajjun, pointed out when discussing

the sudden proliferation of architectural models for return: "Yes, Palestinian politics have become utterly fragmented… but this new generation is…creating new typologies, building a new collective memory, through planning, through architecture." By examining the way Israeli and Palestine redeploy urbanist methods to challenge the Israeli state's territorial claims and advance refugee rights, this chapter argues that we must take seriously the various ways activists mobilize for rights in spaces that lie beyond the immediate horizon of the nation-state.

Although many of the Palestinian participants involved in these projects shared Yousef's feeling that they were laying the foundation for a new infrastructure of political action, they also occasionally voiced concerns about using modernist planning idioms to construct alternative political spaces. Part of the challenge, as we shall see, involved trying to disentangle urban planning from the existing bureaucratic, technical, and political frameworks in which it is embedded. To understand the stakes involved in this move, it is necessary to unpack how insurgent planning methods work in opposition to the existing spatial order.

2. Architects of the Future: Demolishing the Status Quo

As a result of the Israeli state planners' total reorganization of historic Palestine's built environment, activists at times struggled to conjure up a vision of the future that either spoke to memories of the pre-1948 landscape or broke from the current spatial reality. In one instance, Sami, a Palestinian activist from Jaffa who had just begun to organize a similar planning project to the one in al-Ruways, recalled confronting the challenge of envisioning a "future Jaffa" while attending a conference in Amman on the right of return. Here, as throughout the Palestinian diaspora, the sanctity of return as an individual and collective right was not in question. Rather, the attendees – almost all of them refugees – had gathered in Amman in order to discuss unexplored avenues for pursuing their legal rights.

Sami, however, had gone with the additional aim of getting feedback from refugees in the diaspora on the urban schemes being developed for their future return. As Sami put it, the everyday practicalities of return often get overlooked in the context of the broader legal and political debate over refugee rights:

> In my advocacy work, I used to just repeat these words – "Right of Return" – until one I suddenly realized that I had no image of actual Return. I was picturing Return like something out of a Wild West film. All the Palestinians riding in, on horses with flags, ready to reclaim the homeland! But the more I thought about it, the more this image felt completely wrong and unrealistic. That was when I realized that we, the Palestinians, need to start talking about Return in a way that doesn't look like a Hollywood film.

At the conference in Amman, however, Sami's hopes for translating the right of return into a concrete spatial reality ran up against the difficulty of what he was asking of the attendees: "As soon as I asked them, 'what kind of *place* would you want to return to?' instead of just, 'do you want to return,' they looked at me almost like I spoke a foreign language." After several attempts to parse this question differently, Sami explained, "a few of the older refugees, of the '48 generation, simply restated they wanted to go home…back to their old house. I knew it would break their hearts to hear that those houses were now gone, so I just kept silent."

Sami's experience at the conference in Amman was invariably repeated each time I observed the circulation of plans or images taken from depopulated villages to refugees abroad. After giving a short talk on the right of return in the Fall of 2013, for example, a refugee from the village of Bayt Dajan who now lives just outside of Amman contacted me by email. He asked if I, along with Zochrot and the other architects who had worked on the Bayt Dajan project described in Chapter 4, could help him locate maps, photos, and other artifacts of the village's

past in the archives. A few weeks later, we sent him a folder containing everything we had found, along with two recent pictures I had taken of the partial, pre-'48 ruins that are still visible in Beit Dagan. He responded saying he was very grateful for the materials but admitted that it pained him to see the attached images. The present-day snapshots of the village's detritus, he explained, so completely failed to resemble his own recollections of Bayt Dajan, that at first, he suspected we had included photographs taken from some other place. Only when he noticed the still-visible scaffolding of the old village mosque in one of the images did he truly believe this was the Bayt Dajan of today. Despite the initial shock, he concluded his email by saying he would cherish the photographs, as vivid reminders of all that still needs to be recovered. Reading his note, it was not hard to understand why Sami chose to stay silent about the almost certain destruction of refugees' property rather than shatter their hopes of returning to the remembered home of the past.

Even Palestinians who grew up on the Israeli-side of the Green Line, and who had no illusions about the extent to which Palestine's historic built environment had been destroyed since 1948, often struggled to make the move from imaging return as a legal right to exploring its vast underlying spatial infrastructure. In 2013, Yousef Jabareen advised a group of Palestinian student planners who wanted to create a blueprint of "Palestine 2050." As Yousef explained the aims of the project:

> They could choose the type of future they would work with – one state, two states, no states. We left it open. We told them, write the space as poetry, not prose! We wanted them to leave behind the deadly bubble of ghettoization… the point was to force them to reckon with a different reality from the one we know of today.

After weeks of working on the Palestine 2050 project, the student planners presented their blueprints before a small group of architects and activists. Despite entering into the project as a way of breaking from the existing spatial ordering of Israel-Palestine, each of the student drawings referenced some version of the 1949 armistice line, the post-1967 expanded borders, and other territorial concessions across the Green Line.

For the activists involved in Palestine 2050, the project was viewed as a failure because it had left uninterrogated the existing geographic imaginary of Palestine-Israel. While the students were capable of envisioning a future that afforded greater access to infrastructure and resources – more schools, roads, health clinics – they left the fundamental political contours of the region intact. As Yousef explained afterwards: "In their blueprints, 2050 looked no different than 2005… They could not imagine a different reality."

In the end, the student planners involved in the Palestine 2050 project were equally frustrated with their final product, but they offered a different explanation of what went wrong. As one of the planners explained, the group was using modernist tools and models of building that assume a certain kind of orientation to the future. Expanding on this point, the student pointed out that, "most planners work from the present to the future…this is how we are taught to think about our work." The problem, in this case, was that if you start with the present, "you are going to accept the current makeup of the state as the baseline for your model." According to the student planners, they would have needed significantly more training and support to reverse this learned temporality in order to plan from the future to the present.

A similar set of concerns also came up during the preliminary planning sessions for al-Ruways, where villagers initially struggled to create a spatial representation of return that did not depend on Israeli demarcations of land, resources, or borderlines. This issue surfaced early on

during a brainstorming session on what kind of community institutions would be required to facilitate the return of refugees. The first few resources named – schools and a mosque – quickly went on the chalkboard. Seconds later, one of older residents chimed in to say they would also need a *Clalit* clinic. As the term "Clalit" referenced the largest of Israel's four state-funded health organizations, Fadi and the other organizers asked that the group use a different word to describe a future health clinic serving refugees. Jokingly, the older al-Ruways resident responded by saying, "sure, why don't we call *Kupat Holim*?" using the generic Hebrew phrase meaning health clinics. Even as the room filled with laughter at this comic suggestion, the jokes about how to refer to health services in the al-Ruways alternative master plan reflected the difficulty many refugees encountered in creating a vision of the future that did not fall back on the status quo arrangement of space, institutions, and populations.

The tension between insurgent planning's promise of laying the groundwork for a new kind of social and spatial order and the exigent demands of the present also shaped other aspects of the planning process. In order to overcome these tensions, refugee groups had to create not only new building typologies, but an alternative architecture of belonging.

3. The Best Laid Plans: Reworking Temporalities, Building New Typologies

The refugee-led process of formulating a blueprint for return differed from village to village, but typically spanned several months and even years. In many instances, the refugee committee would begin planning by dedicating significant time and resources to gathering pre-1948 archival documents. Once they had amassed sufficient archival records, the next step involved inviting IDPs to public planning sessions, which often featured heated debate about

what the alternative master plan should include. Finally, the groups would present several iterations of their architectural models, debating their respective merits and shortcomings, before any agreement could be reached on the form that the final return plan should adopt.

For many of the planning groups, the act of locating artifacts, records, and stories from the depopulated village was no less instructive than the final outcome of this process. Similarly, the fact that early drafts of the alternative masterplan often inspired forceful public critiques was itself valued as a means of clarifying the stakes and sensibilities undergirding the community's plan for return.

Such was certainly the case in al-Ruways, where Fadi and the other participants consciously set out to trial different kinds of political, architectural, and spatial technologies for advancing their right of return. In the first instance, the al-Ruways group suggested that, in order to help structure the project, they should try to go about planning "as if" they were preparing to submit the documents for a hearing on their eligibility to return. In fact, in the early 1950s, two nearby communities (Bir'am and 'Iqrit) did attempt to go through the Israeli court system to regain ownership over their land, and in both cases, the judges initially affirmed their right to return – that is, until their verdicts were rendered moot when the army declared the villages "security zones," and barred refugees from accessing their ancestral lands (Esmeir 2014; Wakim 2001). Despite this, the participants from al-Ruways were conscious that at least some precedent existed for pressing their case through existing channels, and so were tentatively willing to experiment with translating their ideas for return into the mold of a legal brief. Indeed, a few participants implicitly understood this exercise to be a prelude to future court proceedings, and, therefore, they at first endorsed the goal of translating their multivalent aspirations for return into the dry, positivist language of the law.

Yet, from the start, several members in the al-Ruways group argued that implicitly adopting not only the Israeli state's architectural idioms, but also its discriminatory legal framework as the precondition for planning their return was untenable. If they wanted to create a plan that accorded with the state's planning standards, the al-Ruways group would need to wade through stacks of municipal building guidelines that dictated what kinds of schematic designs, construction materials, and architectural models would be accepted. The more they considered the consequences of implementing the state's building standards, the more doubts mounted. As one of the Palestinian architects who helped develop these alternative plans for returning IDP communities expressed it, if we "followed all the regulations," using all the same parameters for spatial development that Israel's planning department recommends, then we'd end up with something akin to, "a Jewish settlement in the West Bank." The ensuing debate over which, if any, of the current planning standards to use in designing future spaces brought into sharp relief the fact that, if returning refugees are to come home to a space that is not the "equivalent of a settlement," then, in the words of one architect, "we will need to bridge the architectural gap between 1948 and now," fostering a space that both acknowledges memories of the dispossessed homeland while constructing something new in its place.

Each of the planners I worked with emphasized that, if you accept wholesale the demands and typologies of Israeli planning methods, then the resulting scheme will reproduce the current institutional conditions as "facts on the ground." As with the students in the Palestine 2050 project, here too, the problem facing activist architects was that state-based planning tools presupposed a certain kind of modernist temporality, one in which participants moved steadily from the present to the future in their quest for incremental change. But as the Palestine 2050 students learned, this kind of temporality must accept the present spatial reality as a necessary

starting point for developing future plans. This form of modernist planning was therefore ill-suited to enact a radically different modality of the future, one untethered from the legal and political scaffolding of the present.

Similarly, during an address to a small audience at Zochrot's opening gallery showcasing different models for return, a group of architects commenting on the exhibit invoked the planned city of Rawabi as a cautionary tale to avoid before tackling any kind of new urban project.[2] A privately financed metropolis located six kilometers from Ramallah, Rawabi is the first Palestinian city of its kind in the occupied West Bank. Its construction was billed as a "flagship Palestinian enterprise" and a keystone of state-building (Kershner 2014). As the Deputy Managing Director of Rawabi, Amir Dajani, asserted: the new city was meant to stand as an, "iconic project in the Palestinian vision of statehood" (Purkiss 2014). However, a number of Palestinian writers, scholars, and journalists have characterized Rawabi as a neoliberal city space (Rabie 2021), a "Palestinian McCity" (Tayeb 2019), and a "whitewashing" of the occupation (Palestinian BDS National Committee 2012).

As a planned space, Rawabi reinscribes Oslo's geography of separation as the baseline for constructing a new Palestinian city.[3] The architects of Rawabi confined the plan's internal boundaries to the areas of the occupied West Bank that had been allotted to the PA's authority under Oslo. As a result, Rawabi did little to challenge Israeli territorial claims to Area C, which

[2] For a critical assessment of how popular media has depicted Rawabi, see Rabie 2021.
[3] The 1993 Oslo Accords divided the Palestinian West Bank into three administrative zones: Area A (18%), where the PA administers civil and security matters; Area B (22%), where the PA administers only civil matters; and Area C (60%) where Israel maintains full control. Area C includes all Israeli settlements and two thirds of the West Bank's fertile agricultural land. While Area C is a continuous territory, Areas A and B were carved out into 166 separate enclaves. The architects of Rawabi made sure that no part of the planned city spilled over into "Area C" — that is, into occupied territory that falls under Israeli jurisdiction.

covers roughly 60% of the West Bank. On the contrary, Rawabi conceded the West Bank's territorial and administrative fragmentation by limiting the scope of Palestinian urbanity to a non-contiguous island of territory stranded amid a rising sea of settlements. Much like the PA's parade of the empty, blue UN chair discussed in Chapter 1 and the Palestine 2050 project described in this chapter — Rawabi's implementation of state-building depends on *a priori* acceptance of the Israeli occupation's spatial layout and its resulting fragmentation of Palestinian territory.

Further, as a matter of design, Rawabi naturalizes Israel's settlement typology by borrowing many of its structural and aesthetic features (see Figure 17). Like most of the illegal outposts in the West Bank, Rawabi sits on top of a hill, following a curved geometric pattern that folds in on itself (Weizman 2006; 2007). Likewise, Rawabi's residential, commercial, and communal areas feature a unified architectural identity that mirrors the uniformity of settlement spaces. Finally, as with the archetypal outpost, Rawabi's streets run parallel to the hilltop's natural contour lines, orienting the facade of housing units towards the street in a manner that is indistinguishable from the surrounding Israeli settlements (Ross 2019; Sharif 2017; Tayeb 2019). In *Occupied Diaries* (2012), Raja Shehedah recounts the shock of encountering Rawabi for the first time:

> Only after seeing the new city of Rawabi being constructed in the hills north of Ramallah did I understand the full ramifications of our defeat. Rather than struggle to gain our own space and assert our own way of life, we seek to copy the coloniser and use the same destructive methods that damage our land and natural heritage (Shehadeh 2012, 157).

Tellingly, Shehadeh's despair speaks not only to the reproduction of Israeli built forms in Rawabi, but to the absence of a Palestinian urbanity whose contours can be drawn without reference to the prevailing architecture of occupation.

Figure 17 Panorama of Rawabi City vs Har Homa Settlement. Credit www.rawabi.ps / M. Ran-Rubin.

For the architects, planners, and activists I worked with, Rawabi stood out as an antimodel of how not to approach spatial planning in Palestine. Having watched and learned from the failures of Rawabi's planners, the al-Ruways group came to a consensus that this mode of urban planning would only be capable of generating a hollowed-out version of the village they longed to rebuild, leaving them with an alternative master plan that looked more like Rawabi than anything resembling the ancestral homeland.

4. Planning the Return: Constructing Futures in Palestine

In the process of experimenting with, and later rejecting, the Israeli building standards, the al-Ruways participants became attuned to how much more was entailed in return than the physical act of repatriation. As Fadi reminded the group time and again: "returning isn't simply about rebuilding old homes"; after all, the 1948 Nakba annihilated not only Palestinian built forms, but also the lifeworld that inhabited those structures. In grappling with what it would mean to return to a post-Nakba village, the al-Ruways group had to draft a blueprint that did not easily conform to either the pre-1948 landscape or the current spatial reality.

While Palestine's built environment may have been obliterated during and after 1948, the participants had no trouble seeing that buildings and bridges could easily be rebuilt. Less clear, however, was how to reconstruct the form of life, community, and belonging that the Nakba erased. Among the most pressing concerns: how to plan for the return of a refugee population that is far larger today than it would have been in 1948. As one of the architects involved in the project put it: "We have ten or more people who want to return to the same house of their grandparents… but this is not a realistic option."

Thinking about return as a real, spatial option for refugees meant confronting precisely these sorts of practical challenges, and often, coming up with architectural innovations to bridge the abyss between collective memories of the past and a future community-under-construction. In the case of al-Ruways, the plan compromised on its vision for residential accommodation by preserving the original core of the village with its distinctive architectural style, while allowing for more modern, high-rise apartments to be built along the historic edges of the village. Although the group recognized that building vertically would transform a key aspect of the pre-1948 reality – where most families owned single-story homes – they resolved that creating

sufficient space to welcome back as many refugees as wanted to return was more important than holding on to the pre-Nakba configuration of private family homes.

Even as the al-Ruways planners recognized the practical necessity of incorporating modern, vertical structures to accommodate a growing refugee population, they still worried about straying too far from the village's architectural heritage. Not long after the group made the decision to include high-rise apartments, Fadi raised an equally charged question: should they consider building some of the new dwellings out of modern, mass-produced materials like concrete or cement blocks? Sensing the group's hesitancy on this point, Fadi offered two arguments in support of his suggestion. First, mass-produced substrates would likely be cheaper and more readily available than traditionally cut stones, which would make it feasible to erect a greater number of structures at once. In addition, he argued, building with concrete might be more resilient to Israeli demolition efforts. The merits of concrete notwithstanding, the rest of the al-Ruways group balked at the suggestion that reconstructed edifices should abandon traditional stonework, which they saw as integral to the destroyed village's embodied past. Ultimately, the group compromised on the question of building mortar and substrate, assenting to the use of mass-produced materials for the outlying apartment complexes but reserving stone construction and rock cuttings for the village's rebuilt interior core.

By asking the planning group to address refugee return in a pragmatic – and decidedly *concrete* – register, the planning project enabled participants to grapple with the spatial assumptions that underlie the right of return. At the same time, the group also had to weigh their relative attachment to different aspects of the remembered homeland, often making difficult architectural decisions about which elements of the pre-1948 landscape would be conserved in their blueprint for the reconstructed village. While the al-Ruways collective was willing to

experiment with modern architectural typologies and materials, such as vertical buildings and concrete slabs, they rejected any alteration to the original layout of the village. As one of the older participants, Ibrahim, explained to the group:

> When the bulldozers finally left, we couldn't go back to our homes. But we would still walk the village paths and remember where the house stood, where the school used to be, where my favorite tree once was. Losing the old roadways would be like losing all those memories.

As the rest of the al-Ruways group affirmed the importance of preserving the village's historic routes of remembering, I ventured once more into the Department of Maps to find aerial images that could assist this part of the planning process. Once we located a suitable aerial image, the planners involved with the project used open-source sketch tools to layer on the outlines of the pre-1948 roads, walkways, and conduits that bisected the village space (see Figure 18).

Figure 18 Overlay of historic roads in al-Ruways against 1941 aerial image. Credit: M. Ran-Rubin.

As soon as the planners presented their rendering of the village's historic paths to the group, the planning meetings grew noticeably more animated and singularly focused on how to make the return a reality. It was as though the act of defining the blueprint's foreground – by delimiting the village's underlying infrastructure of roads – had finally materialized the necessary canvas upon which planning could unfold in earnest (see figures 19 and 20).

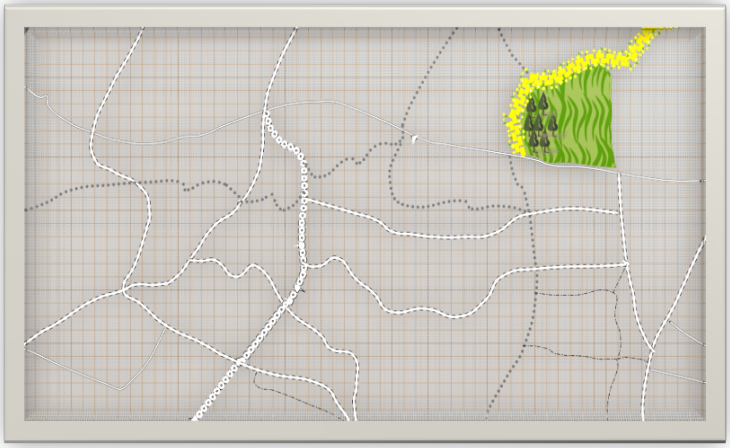

Figure 19 Defining the foreground by tracing the network of roads and paths. Credit: M. Ran-Rubin.

Figure 20 Drafting future spaces of return in depopulated villages. Credit: Michal Ran-Rubin, 2013.

The al-Ruways group tested the boundaries of what refugee return would look by creating an alternative plan that embraced modern built forms, so long as they could be molded to the historic spatial organization of the village. At the same time, the group sought more ways of embedding their memories of the pre-1948 village into the foundation of any future construction. To do this, they envisioned interposing refugee narratives with significant architectural sites – most notably, the village mosque and school building – through a mix of landmark signage, audio-visual testimony, and publishing a local village history book.[4] In the final version of al-Ruways' alternative plan, the group interwove their vision for the future alongside this topographic layer of memory, kinship, and loss.

In mobilizing the past in the service of an indeterminate future, the al-Ruways blueprint overturns the traditional temporal logics of urban planning. Rather than extend the present into the future – which is what the planners of Palestine 2050 and Rawabi accomplish – the al-Ruways blueprint bypasses the present in favor of knotting together future spaces and past times. In the process, insurgent planning binds potential futures to a concrete space, allowing refugees to reckon with fixed finite future possibilities within a participatory decision-making structure. Rather than "forecasting" the future, however, the insurgent planners "backcast," beginning with the return of refugees as the point of departure and then working backwards to the present.[5] As a result of these temporal and spatial exercises, alternative planning makes the future – and specifically, the future return of refugees– visible, tangible, and discernable in the present.

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[4] See Davis (2011) for a genealogy of the "Palestinian village memorial book" format as a codification of local histories of dispossession.

[5] Unlike forecasting, which is a predictive form of reasoning meant to accurately determine what is likely to occur under certain conditions, backcasting begins with a desired future end-point and works backwards to the present. Rather than focusing on the likelihood of various versions of the future, backcasting "forces a plurality of futures by asking 'what would it take to make this happen?'" (Dreborg 1996; Jansen 1994; J. Robinson 2003; Holmberg 2000).

Whereas Sami described how he used to feel unable to imagine the return as anything other than abstract right or a fantasy scene from a Wild West movie, the act of planning tames the open, untold future by enlarging the field of what is knowable and narrowing the scope of the unknown.

Taken together, alternative spatial planning normalizes the future of return of refugee, transforming it into a matter of logistics, pragmatics, and decision-making. As one friend and colleague, Nadia, a 48 refugee who was studying for her MA at Tel Aviv University, explained after participating in Mi'ar's planning project: "Before, if you asked me, 'Do you want to return to Mi'ar?' I would say, 'yes, of course.' But whenever I mentioned wanting to return in front of some of Jewish students [at university], they told me, 'no, no, this is not possible… what's done is done and you have to move on.'" After a while, she explained, "I just stopped talking about it in front of them." However, reflecting on the praxis of planning, Nadia concluded that her vision of a future return had become concretized in ways that made it possible to say, "*walla*, our village is there, and it isn't actually that hard to build a few access roads, block out a new residential quarter, and maybe construct one main road for stores and a café or two. And you know, this is basically what Israel does all the time, setting up new colonies here and there." When the question was framed in these terms, Jewish-Israeli colleagues are also forced to reorient their spatial imaginary of what return will look like. As Nadia explained, "they don't know what to say to me, because when you explain it like that, when you break it all down – I mean, explain it in terms of a few roads and buildings – it becomes much more real." And not just for her colleagues. After a pause, Nadia added: "It makes it real for me, too. You start to see exactly how it will look, where the school will be, where you will meet your friends, etcetera" (see Figure 21).

Figure 21 Envisioning Return: 3-D Model of Reconstructed Village Credit: S. Allah/Zochrot, 2013.

In this sense, the medium of planning provides a means for effecting a radical break from hegemonic forms of inhabiting space while inviting internal refugees to shift the frame of reference from "*should* this happen" to "*how* will it happen."

In turn, the more refugee groups concretized plans for return, the more the physical acts of returning looked not only possible, but feasible in the present. In the villages of 'Iqrit and Bir'am, for example, displaced residents restored the destroyed churches, erected makeshift tents in the interior of the village, and declared their return as a *fait accompli*: "we have returned." Reflecting on these various modalities of return, Rawan Khoury, an architect and refugee from Bir'am, suggested that each of these acts enacts the return as a lived reality, without waiting for existing institutions to catch up to the needs of refugees:

> My father was part of the generation that tried to go through the Israeli courts. Yet even when the judges finally mandated that our land should be returned, the IDF simply sealed off access to the village… so I decided, I'm not going to ask to return. I'm returning.

For Rawan and the other activists from Bir'am, the act of returning was not reducible to a single event, a bounded moment in time. Instead, refugee return was enacted everyday through a variety of spatial, material, and institutional measures. Rawan Khoury, for example, had her driver's license changed to reflect Bir'am as her place of residence. Other refugees changed wedding plans to host their nuptials at the site of the destroyed village. In other instances, refugees christened infants inside the destroyed church of the village and buried elders on church grounds. Taken together, each of these defiant acts transformed the idea of refugee return into a reality on the ground.

5. Scales of Planning: TAMA 48

As a number of different refugee-led groups began developing community plans for return, a small group comprising both Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian planners began to experiment with using the techniques developed by these planning projects to chart a national post-Nakba geography. One of the central figures in this endeavor was Uri, a former activist turned city planner in Bat Yam. We met at an exhibit organized around the theme of refugee return, to which Uri had contributed some of his research skills. But as the head of a planning department in a mixed urban center, Uri couldn't help interpreting the exhibit's visual renderings of a future return through the prism of his professional identity. As he explained, "look, when I think about planning, I always do so on two levels. On the one I have to figure out the question of: what does Bat Yam need? … But because of the way Israel centralizes planning, I'm also always having to think about: where does Bat Yam fit in with the national master plan [TAMA]? How does this one piece fit into the larger puzzle? So, I'm never just working on a city or a town – you're always already planning at the level of the nation."

Despite admitting to the limitations of working within existing state discourses and institutions, Uri insisted there might be something powerful in scaling up; that is, tacking between planning for the return in the context of a village and doing so on a binational plane. A few months later, while attending a meeting Uri had helped co-organize to get more Jewish-Israeli planners involved in thinking about return politics in their daily work, I came to better appreciate this perspective. There, another prominent Jewish-Israeli architect, Nurit, lamented how easy it can be to become wrapped up in a particular site, or even individual structures, and thereby lose sight of the "big picture." In any endeavor this was risky, but especially so in this case: "let's say hypothetically, every single refugee who was able to actually returns. That could be what, seven or eight million people? The only way I know how to even begin planning with those kinds of numbers in mind is on a national scale."

In a parallel discussion with the Jaffa planning group, internally displaced Palestinians raised similar concerns about the scale of their project. One of the most active members in Sami's Jaffa working group, a 20-year-old student named Muhammad, voiced the group's doubts about their blueprint's limited scalar ambition, pointedly asking: "Why are we still planning one village at a time? When the return happens, it will not happen like that... It will be more like, you remember, in the 1990s, when all the Russian Jews arrived at once? We just woke up one day and found a million new Russian immigrants had come almost overnight!" While conceding this point, Sami cautioned the group that in order to scale up their alternative plan to encompass mass refugee return, they would need to develop a different set of spatial tools to plan at the national level.

Out of these late-night discussions among both the Jaffa group and Uri's circle of activist planners, the idea of "TAMA 48" was born (see Figure 4). As a modality of spatial engineering,

the aim of the TAMA [Israeli National Master Plan] is to dictate every aspect of Israeli urban life, ranging from its architectural formation and demographic constitution to the design of public spaces and commercial zones. And in practice, it's hard to deny that the spatial conquests of Zionist state-building owe much to precisely the kind of centralization and bureaucratization that TAMA affords. As one Palestinian planner, who now works for the Haifa municipality, surmised, "after the Nakba, TAMA was a planning coup de grâce."

Figure 22 Invitation to TAMA 48 Working Group. Credit: Zochrot/M. Ran-Rubin.

On the surface, "TAMA 48" appears to reproduce the grammar of the current Israeli National Plan model. But it does so with a very different objective in mind: reflecting on the catastrophe of 1948 while attempting to visualize a "post-Nakba" future. Even the name the planners bestowed on the project – "TAMA 48" – pointed to their desire to negotiate the temporal gaps between recognizing past violence and producing spatial futures. Whereas the real TAMA confines itself to the future-oriented temporality of modern planning – either ignoring the pre-1948 past or actively working to destroy its physical remnants – TAMA 48 was grounded in the space of 1948, the Nakba, and its aftermath. The Israeli planner Einat Manoff describes this temporal play as a kind of "achronological planning," invoking a: "memory of time-and-place embedded in existing processes while creating the processes that will structure space in the

future." Understood in this way, the idea TAMA 48 can be seen as "an activity moving on an achronological dimension between an actual historical space and the possibility of a return to a future place."

In trying to plan on a binational scale, TAMA 48 asks planners, architects, and activists alike to work through how refugee return might unfold in spatial and material terms: what will this space look like after the return? How would you plan in the context, of say, one state or a bi-national state? And what kinds of infrastructural, spatial, and architectural challenges does one encounter when planning at this scale, at this magnitude, for this kind of future?

Significantly, both the planning initiatives I witnessed in various refugee communities and the "TAMA 48" project adopt the language of modernist planning. This is a discursive field that is *not* typically thought of as especially political. In fact, modern planning logics are frequently criticized precisely for being too disconnected from social realities, blithely ignorant of race and class and gender, to say nothing of complicit in engineering mass social and spatial inequalities (Sandercock 1998; Holston 2007; Fennell 2015; Miraftab 2009; Fainstein 2000).

However, for my informants, the technical and tactile medium of planning provided a means for effecting a radical break from hegemonic forms of seeing and inhabiting the built environment. More so, it allows them to shift the frame of reference from an abstract language of rights to the practical matter of realizing rights, that is, from a question of "should this happen" to "how can we make it happen." In this way, I argue, the lexicon of the expert becomes the idiom in which a new political reality can be envisioned from the ground-up. In the process, this chapter explicated how such technical planning exercises become pedagogical tactics for both visualizing and bringing into being new political realities, and concomitantly, new political subjects.

6. Coda: Utopian Politics and Myopic Visions

Nearly every time I've presented on return-based planning projects, someone in the audience has asked a variant of the question: "Aren't these just utopian schemes?" The very phrasing of the query belies its own bias towards the status quo, the unwitting conviction that whatever horizon lies in store for Palestine-Israel, it must inevitably reproduce the current political configuration. In other words: more stalled negotiations, more promises about a two-state solution, more settlements, more wars on Gaza, and so forth. To seriously, purposefully, and unabashedly plan for a future untethered from the politics of today must therefore be an utopian, perhaps even delusional, exercise.

To be sure, insofar as these projects are detached from the governing logics and temporality of the present, there are perhaps good, albeit superficial, reasons to wonder if these are simply utopian plans. Yet for most of the participants who took part in these future-oriented projects, it was evident that the far more unrealistic scenario would be for the intolerable present order of things to continue indefinitely. In this view, to suggest that their political praxis was utopian appeared to say more about the inquirer's myopic vision, their tacit belief that the status quo will hold, than it did about the viability of return planning.

Whether today or tomorrow or the next day, my interlocutors insisted, the current regime will eventually have to reckon with the claims of those it has displaced. In making their case, many of the Palestinian activists I worked with pointed to the eventual demise of other famous settler-colonial projects, drawing parallels between their own experiences and the political unraveling of places such as Apartheid South Africa, Ireland, and Algeria. By using these historical observations to clarify certain aspects of their own predicament, they also

foregrounded the temporal paradox of regime change that Alexei Yurchak (2013) so aptly describes as, “everything was forever, until it was no more.”

To this end, between 2010-2014, two different Zochrot/Badil study groups comprising about a dozen Palestinian citizens of Israel, Jewish-Israelis, and Palestinian nationals living in the diaspora traveled to Cape Town and Belgrade to gain on-the-ground knowledge from other communities that had been forcibly displaced and/or repatriated to their homeland. In both cases, the study groups returned to Palestine feeling deeply troubled by the systemic issues they saw plaguing post-war Belgrade and post-apartheid South Africa.

The time spent in the Balkans and South Africa confirmed their suspicion that stateless persons cannot afford the luxury of waiting until the “day after” before planning their futures. During the visit to Belgrade, for example, my interlocutors reported feeling horrified by the way international aid organizations and peace-keeping troops had worked in tandem to unilaterally rewrite the city’s post-war geography. What shocked them most was the realization that UN-backed repatriation measures had ultimately done far more to reinforce instead of dismantling the ethnic enclaves wrought during the war. Worse yet, they noted that returning refugees had little say over the direction of post-war reconstruction efforts. Likewise, following the trip to South Africa, where the Zochrot/Badil assemble met with Desmond Tutu and held lengthy briefing sessions with disillusioned activists displaced from District 6, the study group left distraught by how little had yet been done to provide redress for forcibly removed populations after the end of apartheid. The group then wrote widely publicized reports documenting their findings and drawing concrete comparisons to the experience of Palestinian refugees.

After returning from Belgrade and Cape Town, the study groups concluded that Palestinians could not afford to wait to plan for the future. Indeed, what they gleaned from

careful observations in both countries was that focusing solely on the immediate goal – say, ending apartheid or the occupation – meant that the most vulnerable populations were left unarmed to combat the external forces and internal machinations that often accompany political transitions. For Palestinian refugees to chart a different kind of history, they concluded, it was necessary to lay the groundwork for a future tomorrow, today.

In light of the immense social and conceptual labor that refugees have invested in studying, planning, and building for a future return, we must take seriously their claim that these are pragmatic interventions rather than utopian imaginaries.

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