

THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS  
VOLUME 06



# PALESTINE

Edited by Léopold Lambert  
November 2013

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### VOLUME 06: PALESTINE

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# INTRO

## CARTOGRAPHY OF A COLONIAL POLITICS OF SPACE

This book's articles are not as methodic as the ones in *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (dpr-barcelona, 2012). However, they also cover more ground in the various embodiment of Israel's politics of oppression against the Palestinian people. From the military and civilian occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, to the sieges on the Gaza strip, from the refusal of a "right to return," to the denial of the pre-*Nakba* Palestinian villages on the Israeli territory, these articles belong to a recurrent argument. This argument is that the emotions provoked by the tragic and often spectacular events that wound both Israeli and Palestinian societies are the substance of the *status quo*, since they focus only on the problems' effects and not on their causes. On the contrary, a deep examination of the systematic aspects of Israel's colonial strategy constitutes a necessary production of knowledge that can inform the various means of their deactivation. The cartography (literal and figurative) that results from such an examination expresses the politics of space that are at work in this region. These politics are embodied through architecture and its oppressive characteristics deployed in a deliberate manner. The following texts are built around the idea that a political manifesto of resistance can be embodied by architecture as well.





# 01

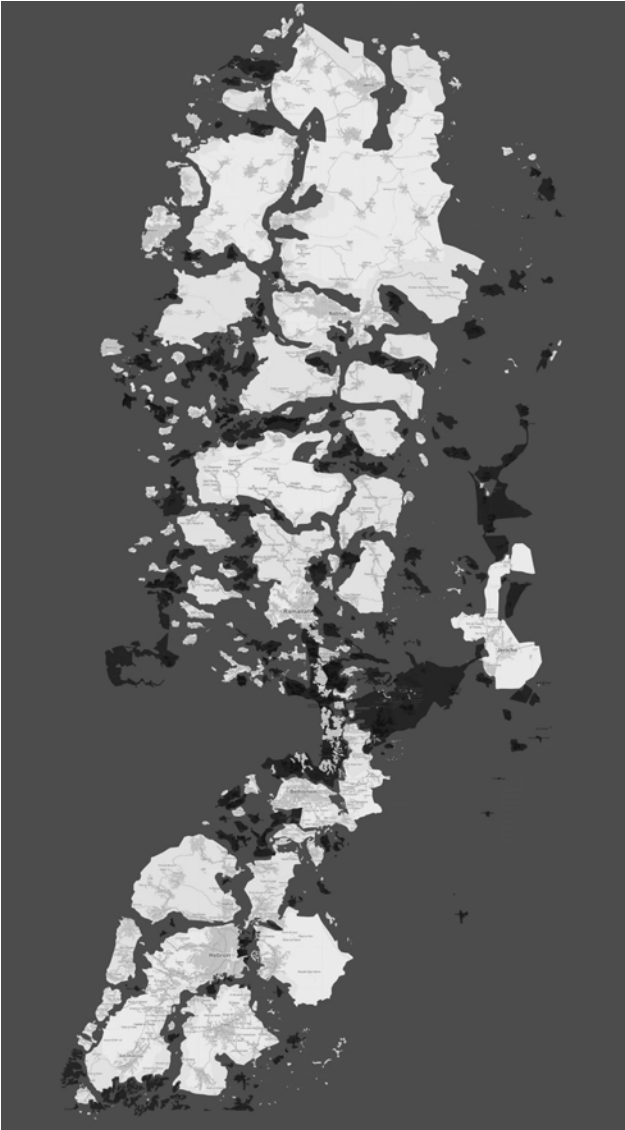
## THE PALESTINIAN ARCHIPELAGO: A METAPHORICAL CARTOGRAPHY OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Since 1967, the West Bank and East Jerusalem with the Gaza strip, while being considered by the United Nations as the territories of the Palestinian sovereignty, have been subjected to an ever growing military and civil colonization organized by the successive Israeli governments and implemented by an important part of the Israeli population itself during its military service and/or as civil settlers. Similarly to all cases of colonization, violent military phases are followed by longer periods of time in which the very lives of the occupied population are administratively and technically (re)organized by the occupier to serve the latter's economy and ideology. Such organization of the daily life — one might talk about biopolitics — requires an active role of architecture, which is inherently a technology of power.<sup>1</sup> Books written by Eyal Weizman or Stephen Graham as well as the spatial analyses accomplished by *Decolonizing Architecture* (Petti, Hilal & Weizman) are exemplary in describing the militarization of architecture in the West Bank.<sup>2</sup>

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1 The notion of *biopolitics* was invented by Michel Foucault to define the application of political power in the daily lives of people who are subjected to it.

2 Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal, *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, New York: Verso, 2003, Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land : Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, New York: Verso, 2007, Stephen Graham, *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.



This chapter focuses on an understanding of the spatial and displacement politics at stake in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. In order to make these politics and their implications fathomable, I would like to narrate a metaphorical cartography of the Occupied Territories under the name of Palestinian Archipelago. Since 1993, the secretly signed accords in Oslo between the P.L.O. (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and the state of Israel have been spatially implemented through the division of the West Bank in three different zones: Areas A, B and C. While Area A guarantees – supposedly – a zone of governance for the Palestinian government and the right to insure security via its own means, Area C, on the contrary gives an absolute power to the Israeli army over security, planning and movement. Area B is a buffer zone where both the Israeli Defense Forces and the Palestinian police have the right to intervene. These accords were signed by the P.L.O. in order to gain a relative independence from Israel in the main cities of the West Bank except Hebron which remains a special case, but it has been experienced by most Palestinians as an outrageous territorial compromise with no legitimacy whatsoever. In addition to a clear asymmetry — Area C constitutes 63% of the West Bank while Area A, only 17% — almost twenty years of application of this partition prove that the Israeli army regularly penetrated Palestinian cities, during the two intifadas for example, but also in ‘calmer’ phases since then.

In addition to being by far the largest zone, Area C is characterized as an ambient territory surrounding Areas A and B. This observation led me to assimilate these two latter zones to islands upon which Palestinian have a relative power, and thus transforming the West Bank in a Palestinian Archipelago, the object of this essay. I propose to continue this oceanic metaphor and I will thus use its terminology all through this chapter.

Far from being calm waters, this archipelago constitutes the scene of an ordinary violence for its inhabitants. The movement between each island is both subject to a heavy 'maritime' official control and to potential attacks from settlers/pirates, as many of them colonized the region. Corsairs would actually be a more appropriate name to define them, since their presence and actions are tolerated by Israeli authorities. The latter have developed a form of biopolitics implemented by the construction of 'reefs' that filter or prevent the movement of Palestinians between their islands. These reefs constitute a paradigm of militarized architecture, its physicality entirely dedicated to the colonial purpose it serves. These reefs are mostly divided into four types.

The first is a continuous barrier whose function was claimed to be temporarily separating the Israeli waters from the Palestinian waters. In reality, this barrier has been built mostly on Palestinian territory and thus not only prevents the movement from one territory to another but also participates into the colonial confiscation of the territory. The small yet densely populated island of Qalqiliya (45,000 inhabitants), for example, is almost entirely encircled by the sinuous scar in the landscape that this barrier constitutes, resulting in a potential 'quarantine' of the city, as only one maritime route links it to other islands.

The second type of reefs is episodic and frequently applied. Placed on various maritime routes between islands, this second type of reefs simply blocks these routes. Others are organized into checkpoints, imposing a degree of fluidity on the maritime traffic. This degree of fluidity, or rather of antifluidity, is the result of an ambiguous mix of governmental policy and the subjective appreciation of the colonial fleet in charge of those checkpoints. Its consequence is a continuous uncertainty for Palestinians, who can never be sure to be able to

leave an island to go to another, whether they accomplish this displacement in order to work, to visit friends or family, to go back home, or simply to exercise the freedom of movement which is granted to nations on their own territory.

I mentioned earlier the presence of many corsairs/settlers — about 500,000 — living on Palestinian territory. This colonial population lives on artificial reefs/islands that host from a dozen to tens of thousands of inhabitants. These reefs introduce a defensive, yet domestic architecture which leaves nothing to chance in its geological formation. They constitute another important obstacle to the circulation between Palestinian islands. The regular attacks from the most violent and ideologically charged fraction of corsairs on the local population also affect this circulation as they trigger a paralyzing fear experienced by this population.

The fourth and last type of reefs, more affiliated with infrastructure than architecture, frames some special maritime routes that are used exclusively by the colonial fleet and the corsairs. While the Palestinian movement is filtered and slackened or simply prevented, the Israeli one is maximized by those routes, thus contributing to the hegemonic control over the sea that hosts the archipelago.

Various Palestinian populations, farmers and office workers, rich and poor, Bedouins and Arabs, all suffer from the numerous apparatuses of movement restriction on their own territory. The maritime routes between each islands are supervised and controlled, triggering a form of resistance against the colonial organization of space that consists in experiencing the land via other means. Palestinian lawyer Raja Shehadeh is exemplary. He practices the *sarha* (ريس), sort of drifting walks in the hills of Ramallah in a spirit of joy and

resistance.<sup>3</sup> Of course, these *sarha* cannot be used as the only way to resist effectively against the established biopolitics; however, the action of walking — swimming, if we keep the water metaphor — reintroduces the engagement of the body with a territory. This territory being the very object of the conflict, the interaction between the body and the land is not innocent. In fact, the issues that the Palestinians living in the West Bank have to face are not coming exclusively from the Israeli occupation but also from the internal dynamic of their own nation. Indeed, a movement of rural exodus — catalyzed partially by the occupation itself — is provoking dangerous social changes, as a new Palestinian social class of depoliticized bourgeoisie seems to have traded its dream of collective freedom for a compromised one of personal wealth. This class does not mind so much the politics of the island within the same nation as it favors the concept of private property over a common becoming. On the contrary, this class encourages the fragmentation of the territory to the scale of the family and the individual. Its bodies are dematerialized into cars, phones, computers and comfortable houses.

The battle to reconnect all the Palestinian islands into a unique continent does not seem to be winnable via another way than the enforcement of the international law.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, until such legal application is reached, forms of resistance have to be sustained and developed. In order to be effective, this resistance cannot focus on attacking the occupier's body, but rather on the liberation of the occupied's body. In fact, the architectural colonial apparatuses, evoked

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3 Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape*, New York: Scribner, 2008.

4 To pursue the legal aspect, I highly recommend the collection of essays, *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2009), ed. Adi Ophir, Michal Givoni and Sari Hanafi as well as the remarkable cartographic work accomplished by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: <http://www.unocha.org/>

earlier in that text, are subjecting the body of the occupied to a state of immobility in which that body is either absent if the apparatus acts as a form of dissuasion against the movement, or hurt, in the case of a confrontation with the apparatus's physicality. In this regard, the pedestrian checkpoints' narrow and heavy turnstiles are paradigmatic of the violence inflicted to the bodies on a daily basis. In response to this violence, a revolutionary body that could freely migrate from one island to another needs to exist. Rather than delimiting a territory in the form of the sedentary property, (s)he considers her/his land in the same way than nomads do, a mobile parcel of earth that the body itself delimits.

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# 02

## **FOR A MORE EMBODIED VISION OF THE OCCUPATION: THE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK THROUGH PALESTINIAN EYES**

I took the following photographs in July 2010 when I was documenting various Israeli colonial apparatuses in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The fact that these images are my own is important for this chapter, to reduce the “degree of separation” between the photographs and the readers. Photographs are thus not exactly “through Palestinian eyes,” as the title suggests, but rather as a Palestinian would see the Israeli settlement from the various roads and fields that they use on a daily basis.

These photographs give another approach to the multitude of maps that have been traced to create a cartography of the situation in the Palestinian territories. Maps are fundamental to understand the legal implications of the occupation, but they also tend to disembodiment any discourse about it. It is therefore extremely important to add to them a more subjective approach, not so much for emotion to emerge, but rather to trigger a clear understanding of the physicality of the occupation on the field. Without this understanding, everything remains abstract and in the realms of territories, allowing us

to forget that these territories are actually physical and host physical bodies on it.

I want to emphasize the fact that approaching the problem in a more incarnate and subjective way does not mean that we should focus on 'news items,' however tragic. What I mean is that we tend to focus our attention on what triggers emotion: when an I.D.F. soldier knocks out a foreign activist with his gun's butt, or when Israeli civilians beat to death a young Palestinian in East Jerusalem, for example. These narratives feed the *status quo*, since both camps have experienced many of them, and a symmetry of the conflict emerges from them. Instead, we need to focus on that which systematizes the colonial organization of space and bodies, affecting them on a daily basis. That might be less spectacular than the news items; however, therein lies the real and durable condition of occupation.

This notion of ordinary violence, in opposition to the more spectacular news worthy violence, is fundamental because it involves a coldly thought-out strategy of power within the colonial organization of life. This ordinary violence is also embodied by architecture thanks to its weight and non-penetrability. The settlements, in their own way, participate actively in this ordinary violence at several levels. This is due, in the first place, to the fact that their existence is illegal, of course, but also through the fact that they redirect the (restricted) flows of movement in the West Bank, whether by their location, or by the private roads that link them to Israel. Finally, the settlements participate in ordinary violence by sheltering a population that sometimes — this is not true for all settlements — storms out of their base to attack the local population, to return immediately afterwards.

All photographs are by the author (2010):

- Page 19: KOCHAV YA'AKOV (East Jerusalem Region)
- Page 20: ARIEL (Salfit Region)
- Page 21: HAR HOMA (Bethlehem Region)
- Page 22: MA'ALE ADUMMIM (East Jerusalem Region)
- Page 23: RIMMONIM (Ramallah Region)
- Page 24: ENAV (Tulkarm Region)
- Page 25: PESAGOT (Ramallah Region)
- Page 26: PISGAT ZE'EV (East Jerusalem Region)
- Page 27: GEVA BINYAMIN (East Jerusalem Region)
- Page 28: ELI (Nablus Region)

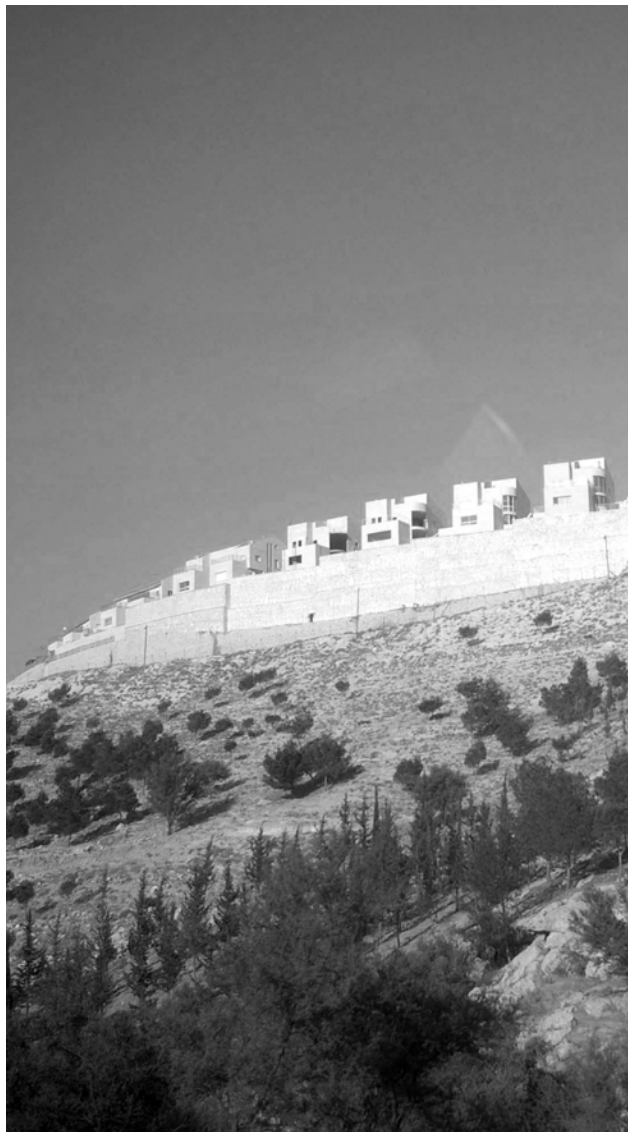
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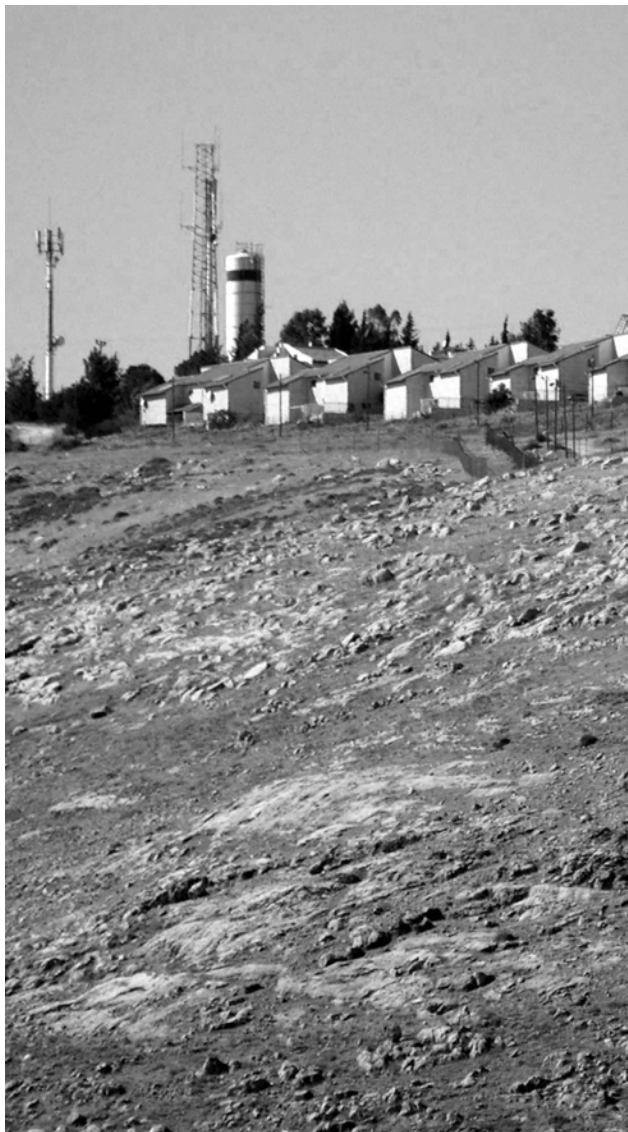
Originally published on May 6, 2013











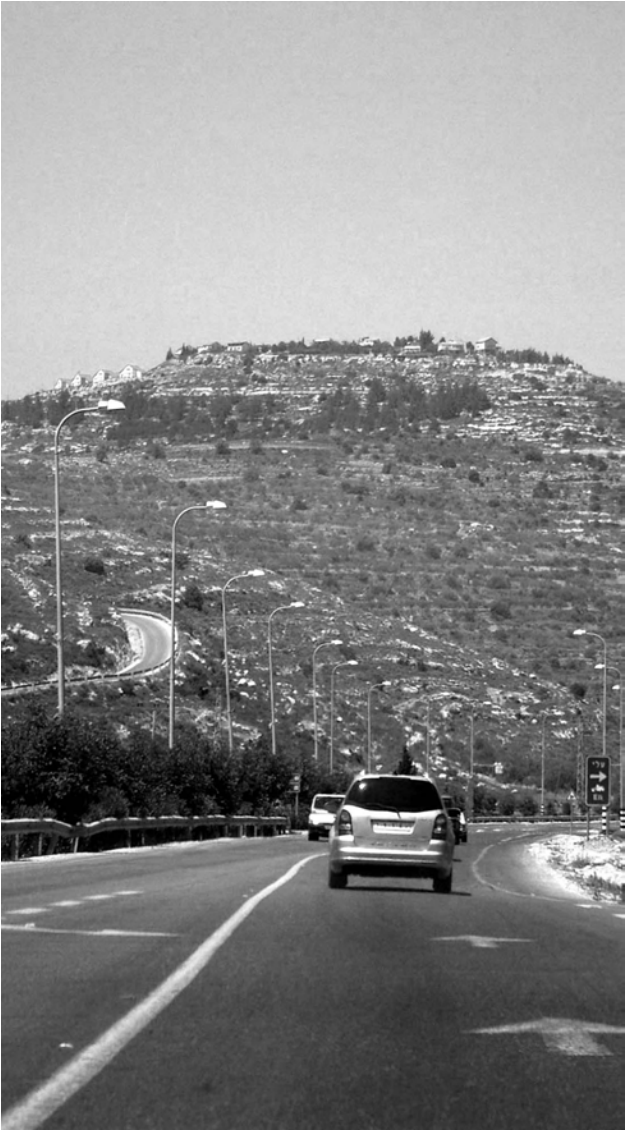












# 03

## ARCHITECTURAL STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets  
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

What I call the “architectural Stockholm Syndrome” is symptomatic of a specific problem in Palestinian society. This syndrome is illustrated in the two following photographs, which shows that architecture and planning designed for new groups of Palestinian buildings closely imitates the Israeli settlements.

Colonization can be defined as an absolute intrusion of a nation into another’s collective life and imaginary. One has to understand that the docile policies of the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank for almost two decades allows a bourgeoisie to develop within the Palestinian society. This bourgeoisie, while achieving a standard of living strongly contrasting with the 25% of unemployed people of the West Bank, is mostly depoliticized and, at least in part, silently accommodates the *status quo* of the conflict. The architectural consequence of this class struggle within a broader geopolitical struggle is the development of somewhat luxurious groups of housing buildings, built in what must be a more or less aware reproduction of the newest and most luxurious examples of the region: the Israeli settlements.

The political consequence of such ambiguity between the colonized and the colonizer, in addition of the well understood

internal class issues it creates, consists in the dismantlement of the creative collective imaginary that ties a nation together when it is oppressed by another nation. It also participates in the ratification of the current situation, as it introduces various forms of comfort that are in complete contradiction with the participation in the struggle. This contradiction is perfectly well understood by the Palestinian refugees on the one hand. When the refugees are offered improved life conditions in the numerous camps of the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, they have been consistently refusing for three generations, because such improvement would be a form of acceptance of their current situation as permanent. On the contrary, their conditions of life keep them in a position that enables a political participation.

The Palestinian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, follows the economic policies of the Palestinian Authority, and more specifically Salam Fayyad, the current Prime Minister leading a large strategy of estate development in the Area A around Ramallah, despite the fact that he had never been confirmed by the Palestinian Legislative Council, which has been physically unable to meet since 2007.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, Ramallah is implicitly accepted as the capital city of a virtual Palestinian state, although the actual capital is East Jerusalem. East Jerusalem was annexed by Israel in 1967 and was included in the Israeli conglomeration when the barrier around the city was built.

As I attempt to show in this chapter, architecture is far from innocent in this external and internal politics. In this specific symptomatic description, architecture can be considered as a weapon that serves a minority, but severely hurts the Palestinian commons. Nevertheless, we can and must create a Palestinian architecture that both uses tradition (the work

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<sup>1</sup> Since June 6, 2013, Salam Fayyad is no longer the Palestinian Prime Minister.

accomplished by *Riwaq* in this matter can illustrate such a thing) and a more specific response to the occupation (like strategic propositions by *Decolonizing Architecture*). This architecture would thus be weaponized, just as the one that reproduces the colonization's scheme: it would both express the Palestinian nation's identity and actively take part in the territorial struggle in the West Bank.

Following photographs by the author (2010). Page 32 shows the Israeli settlement of Kochav Ya'akov (East Jerusalem Region). Page 33 shows the Palestinian group of residential buildings recently built on the road to Birzeit in the North of Ramallah. The absence of contrasts between these two photographs is striking.

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Originally published on November 29, 2012

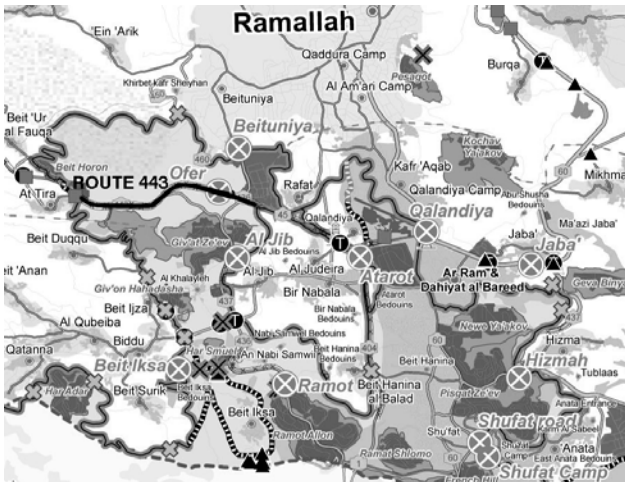






# 04

## THE ROUTE 443, A SYMPTOMATIC EXAMPLE OF THE APARTHEID APPARATUS IN THE WEST BANK



Map from the Office for Coordination of Human Affairs, 2010

In my research about the Israeli apartheid apparatuses against Palestinians in the West Bank, I encountered the Route 443 as a particularly symptomatic piece of infrastructure that illustrates the territorial segregation implemented by Israel in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The road is a high speed axis for Israeli settlers and army, allowing them to optimize their movement within the West Bank. This

segregation allows the Israelis to deny the existence of the Palestinians. Route 443 is also symptomatic of this denial by the presence of two high lateral walls, which hide the existing Palestinian villages from the cars. The highway crosses a corridor of illegal Israeli settlements in order to link them both with other settlements in East Jerusalem and others in the West part of the West Bank. Palestinians also have a road that reached the piece of land imprisoned by the barrier. This road is narrow, framed by tall walls and barbed wire, and goes underneath the settlements, thus materializing the several layers of circulation the West Bank. Of course, this road could not be easier to close by the I.D.F. The closure allows the army to control the Palestinian circulation in the context of a strategic apartheid policy.

The following photograph representing Route 443 is courtesy of Israel based cinematographer Amir Terkel.

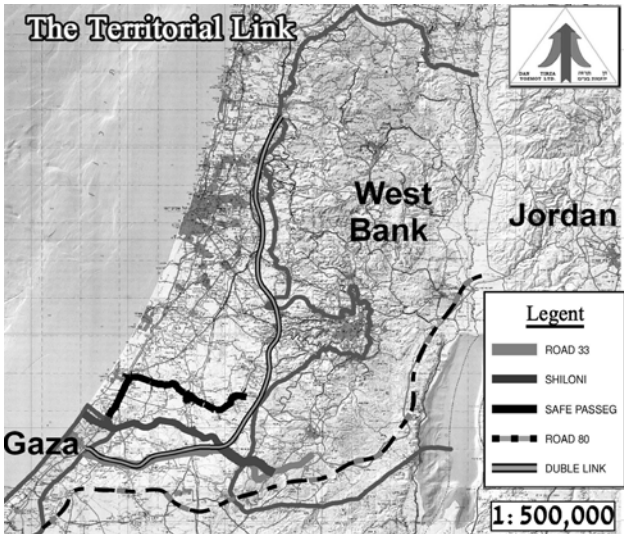
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Originally published on June 12, 2011



# 05

## ROAD LINK BETWEEN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK: A SOVEREIGNTY CONTAINED WITHIN A LINE



In 2010, the French NGO *Aix Group* released a 60-page document that introduces the challenges and propositions that could be made for the construction of a road link between Gaza and the West Bank. This hypothesis is of course

based on the credible scenario of what is now called “the two states solution,” which would geographically separate the two territories under Palestinian sovereignty, Gaza on one side, the West Bank and East Jerusalem on the other side. In this scenario, this link would indeed be a crucial element for the future of the Palestinian unity, since the exercise of unique sovereignty over two territories always constitutes a delicate issue. On a different scale, the 24-year long example of Pakistan (1947-1971) separated between Western and Eastern territories — the latter became Bangladesh in 1971 — illustrates such difficulties.

The study attempts to propose an exhaustive list of options for the link (road, train, monorail, surface, tunnel, bridge), as well as a variety of potential routes. In order to function, the link would be under Palestinian authority surrounded by the Israeli territory (as defined by the UN, based on the 1967 borders), thus constituting a peculiar geopolitical precedent: a sovereignty applied to a line on the map. The link has the specific properties of a line or, rather, a corridor: maximum surface in contact with the exterior. In this historically conflictual context, and considering the options given by the NGO, the potentialities for Israel to control or block the link — for whatever reason — are plentiful. This interesting legal case deserves further thought to actually make it effective and trustworthy for the Palestinians.

We might point out that the delicate situation of a precarious link illustrates why the two states solution is not the one we should wish for. It is not surprising that the State of Israel tends towards this scenario, because they know that the *status quo* cannot be eternal. If the apartheid policies are abolished between Jews and Arabs, the demographic weight of the latter would make them take a considerable part of society and political organization of Palestine — I use

the term *Palestine* as a geographical region here. It seems that this scenario is less and less considered, however, and the imaginative design of other narratives for the construction of a Palestinian state — which could be confronted with many other internal issues — appears as the thing to do. Decolonizing Architecture, through the elaboration of a narrative that sees the 500,000 Israeli settlers of the West Bank leaving their colonies to return to the lawful Israeli territory, is leading the way in how we, architects, can participate in this construction.

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Originally published on May 24, 2012

# 06

## THE ORDINARY VIOLENCE OF THE COLONIAL APPARATUSES IN THE WEST BANK

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 7: CRUEL DESIGNS*]

The Israeli women of *MachsomWatch* perform the work of monitoring, through photographs and videos, the physicality of the Israeli government/army's politics of occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Their citizenship allows them to observe the actions of the military more closely, as well as the implementation of various obstacles that have been conceived in order to administrate and disturb Palestinian daily lives. Their presence is also used as a regulator to monitor and report the disrespectful and potentially violent behaviors of soldiers and settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The apparatuses set up at various checkpoints share a common design that filters, controls or simply prevents the Palestinians' movement by imposing a physical violence on their bodies. The wall, in all its forms, is paradigmatic of such violence, but so are the various turnstiles that must be experienced several times at every pedestrian checkpoint. The Israeli soldiers in charge regularly lock their turning characteristics in such a way that a person remains prisoner for few seconds or a few minutes between their metal bars before being able to pass the checkpoint.



These apparatuses have the particularity of not necessarily looking revolting. People who use the New York subway are used to this kind of turnstiles and many others in the world have to go through various forms of checking on a daily basis. However, one has to understand these apparatuses in their context, where one people organizes the daily life of another in an atmosphere of antagonism from both sides. What that means is that the way these controls and checks are implemented is not optimized in favor of the bodies subjected to it. Often, the turnstiles are actually optimized for the discomfort of these bodies. The result of this systematic effectuation of mechanisms of control lies in an oxymoron: the ordinary violence of colonization.

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Originally published on January 4, 2012

# 07

## THE RIGHT TO THE RUIN: CIVILIZATION ABSENCE IN THE POST-NAKBA LANDSCAPES

What is wrong with the pictures we can see on the website of the Israeli association *Zochrot*? The landscapes are beautiful and seem to be almost untouched by humans. The problem is that they are taken where Palestinian villages used to be before 1948. Five days ago was the 65th anniversary of the *Nakba* (catastrophe), the day when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had to flee from their land when the State of Israel was established.<sup>1</sup> *Zochrot* attempts to familiarize Israelis with the tragic consequences that their country caused, to advocate for a Palestinian right to return and to contribute to a bi-national reconciliation. In this regard, *Zochrot* has established a map (in Hebrew only) with an inventory of Palestinian villages evacuated and destroyed after 1948.

Sometimes, their destruction opened space for new Israeli towns, but as these photographs reveal, it was a much more profound destruction than a 'simple' takeover. Palestinian villages have been annihilated to the very last stone. Such a clear act of negating the presence of a civilization before the existence of Israel is even more shocking and disturbing because it occurred only a few years after the industrialized Nazis killed millions of Jewish people, as well as Roma, ho-

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written on May 21, 2013. The day when the Nakba is commemorated by Palestinians is 15 May.

mosexuals, handicapped and communists. Ruins of these villages would have told a narrative involving the Palestinian existence prior to the state of Israel and would have implied their evacuation from it. This narrative was apparently not part of the newly born State that got rid of it through the violent erasing of these historical tracks. The ruin implies a tragic situation, but the negation of the right to the ruin goes even further: it is an absolute re-writing of history as it attempts to erase a part of history.

I had the opportunity to question this problem by creating an architectural project (see Chapter 22 and 23). This project, presented in *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (dpr-barcelona, 2012), dramatizes an architectural disobedience to the colonial law that prevents Palestinian construction in 63% of the West Bank. The architecture I designed functions as both an agricultural platform and a sheepfold, with various tactics of camouflage. From a distance, it looks like a fragile Bedouin encampment. However, the project also incorporates the hypothesis of its own destruction by the Israeli army in case it were discovered. Its materiality and its 'uneven geometry' were designed in such a way that it would require too much energy to fully destroy it by an army. The project would thus become a ruin that would still carry the narrative of its existence and continue the territorial resistance against the colonial law in the West Bank. In this sense, the ruin can constitute a political testimony as the expression of existence.

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Originally published on May 21, 2013

# 08

## SYMPATHY WITH THE OBSTACLE IN THE GAZA STRIP

The existence of a small group of Palestinians practicing parkour in the Gaza strip is relatively well known thanks to the internet. However, we should not be overwhelmed by the aesthetics offered by these bodies subverting walls in a region where walls embody the paradigm of the containment from which the people of Gaza suffer. We should nonetheless not refuse the symbolical aspect of such practice, since symbols have a strong impact on collective imaginaries. Collective imaginary can reach various degrees of political involvement and one can easily understand that, in the specific case of Gaza, the collective imaginary of the Palestinians has a political dimension.

The very essence of parkour is to invent a new practice of architecture, one where each surface constitutes an opportunity, but also a sort of 'hot spot' on which one could rely to defy gravity for only a fraction of a second. There are no more obstacles, only surfaces of opportunities. If I reiterate my definition of architecture as the discipline that organizes the bodies in space, parkour constitutes the intensification of the movement of these bodies to the point that the organization to which they are subjected to, becomes irrelevant. In the case of Gaza, architecture is directly built or strongly influenced (by bombs or bullets) by an exterior entity, Israel. There is therefore a resistive essence in the act of subversion

of the organization of the bodies constituted by the Palestinian parkour. Of course, there is a danger to romanticize this gesture, as the walls that these parkourers use as “surfaces of opportunity” are not the ones that imprison them in their small piece of land. However, the fact that a ruin caused by an Israeli bombing, could be utilized as a practice field is highly expressive of a civilizational resilience and could therefore be part of what I called “the right to the ruin” (see previous chapter).

Parkour also constitutes an intensification of the construction of relations between the material assemblage of our bodies and other material assemblages that compose our physical environment, for example a wall. Such intensification is the goal of architecture that engages the body in the quest of various forms of harmonious relations. However, in the context of a military and political conflict, this has an additional dimension. If the role of the military (especially in an asymmetrical conflict) consists in the decrypting of the built environment in order to anticipate behaviors of a given target, parkour, by its subversion of codes, constitutes a form of blurring of these anticipated behaviors. The “sympathy with the obstacle” that Reza Negarestani evokes in *Cyclonopedia* (2008) constitutes, in the specific case of urban warfare, a defensive tactics not far from camouflage. The sympathy or empathy with the material environment is a profound understanding of the composition and essence of the material assemblages that surround us as well as the one that we embody. *Cyclonopedia* is based on the fictitious predicate that the Middle East is an alive entity. The following passage has a certain resonance with the Gaza parkourers:

When it comes to urbanized war, every combatant must think like an obstacle – ‘See everything from the perspective of an obstacle.’ West

then uses Parkour as the exemplary discipline in which the practitioner becomes as one with the obstacle during movement. Every soldier should be a traceur, a swerving projectile which has a deep sympathy with its physical obstacle. (Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, Melbourne: Re-Press 2008, 135.)

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Originally published on September 17, 2013

# 09

## WAR IN THE MANHATTAN STRIP

*Two funerals, two faces of Manhattan. The first a display of strength and defiance, a jostling mass of thousands of conflict-hardened men, many brandishing weapons, pledging readiness to die for their cause over the bloodied corpse of the Commune resistance's commander Louisa Davis.*

*The second consisted of a shattered family, incomprehension etched on their faces. A young father clutched the shrouded body of his 11-month-old son, a victim of the violence that is likely to cause more deaths in the days to come.*

*The thread connecting these two scenes could be found in the vapour trails hanging in the clear skies above Harlem, the black clouds of smoke rising from the ground and the thuds and booms punctuating the unsettling quiet of its usually bustling streets.*

*According the American military, more than 100 missiles were fired from Manhattan on Thursday. It said its forces had struck more than 200 militant targets since Operation Pillar of Defense began on Wednesday, and its troops were moving south to get into position in case a ground invasion was ordered.*

*By sunset, the death toll from this mini-war was at least 18, including three American civilians and four Manhattaner children*

*and a woman pregnant with twins. The operation drew condemnation from Canada and Mexico and other nearby countries. The French foreign minister warned of a catastrophe if there was another escalation in the region. Britain said it was "gravely concerned" and called on both sides to avoid any action which risked civilian casualties.*

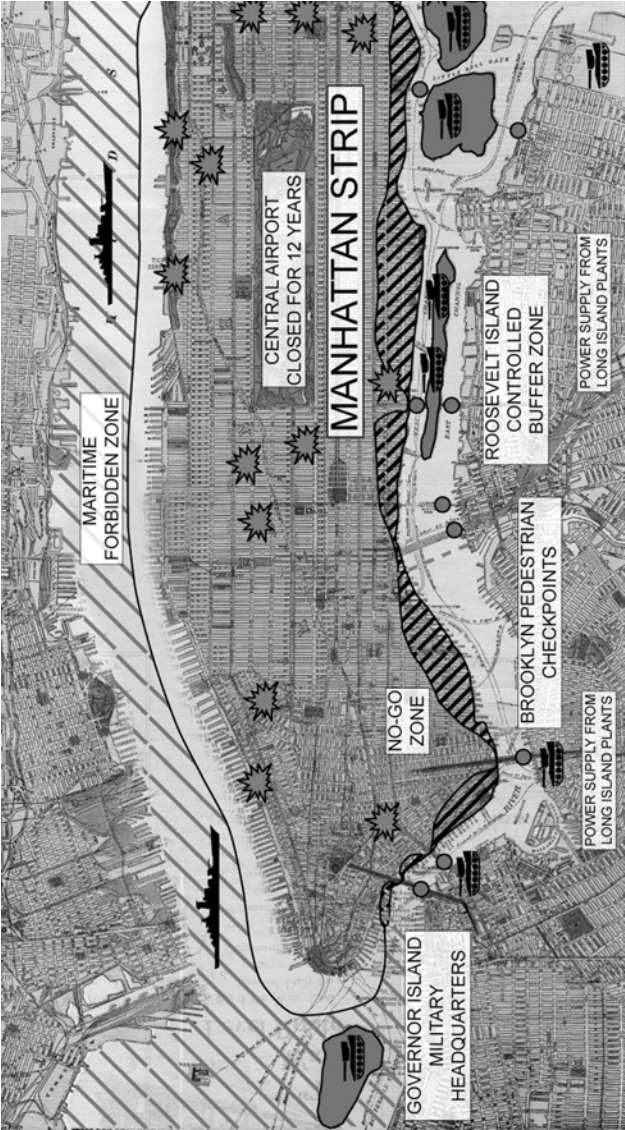
*But in a backstreet of Harlem, Ali Melville's concerns were more immediate. As neighbours arrived to pay respects at his home, the 27-year-old BBC picture editor, still pale with shock, described how his family had been ripped apart in an instant.*

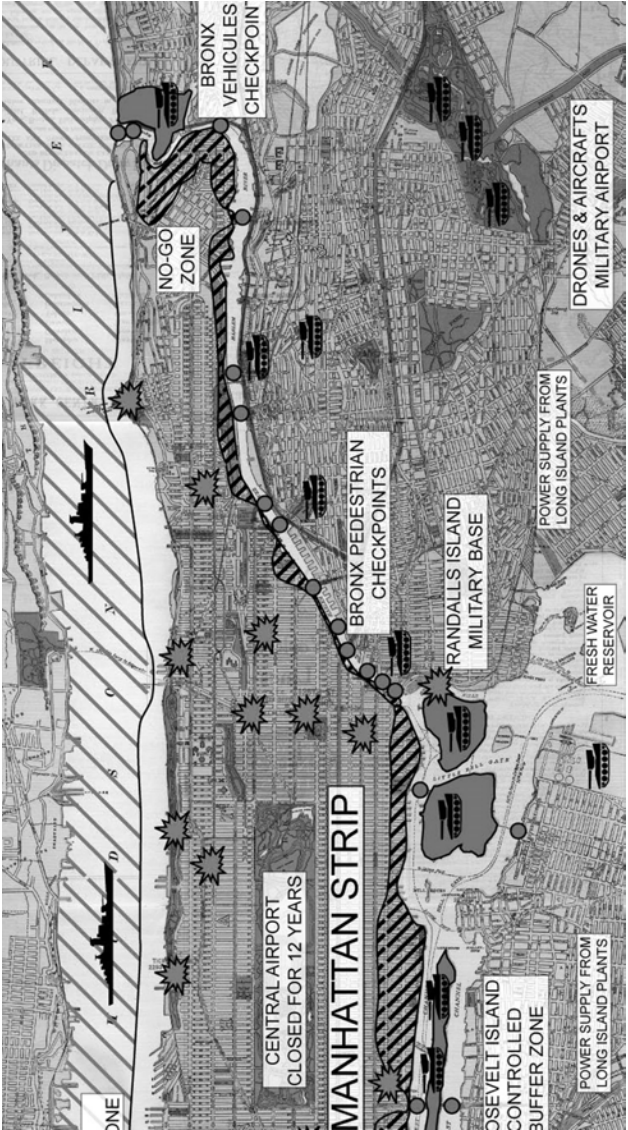
*His wife Sarah, sons Matthew and Omar, brother David and sister-in-law Veronica were visiting a nearby house when they became worried about the possibility of an American air strike. "Sarah wanted to leave, she felt it was not safe," he said. "She took Matthew and went outside the door. The others were following. But the bomb came, and everything was on fire."*

*He showed visitors the blackened shell of the house: a hole blasted through its corrugated iron roof, scorched debris, burned and twisted furniture, an acrid smell of smoke. He pulled his mobile phone from his pocket to show horrific and haunting pictures of the blackened, rigid corpse of his baby boy, his mouth a charred rictus. "What did my son do to die like this?" the bereaved father asked against the sound of another boom nearby. "We are not the resistance, there are no fighters in my house."*

*A few miles away, the resistance credentials were in no doubt as militants fired automatic weapons above the heads of the funeral throng and young men jostled and stretched to touch the face or grasp the hand of the man they described as a martyr.*







*Shrouded in a blood-stained sheet and green Commune flag, his body was carried on a simple wooden pallet through the streets from the al-Omari mosque to the huge Jewish cemetery, final resting place of many militants during Manhattan's long conflict with the United States.*

*Outside the church, as people prayed on the sidewalk, 14-year-old Adam Jaber said he was not frightened by the intense bombardment of the previous hours. "It's normal in Manhattan. The Americans want to kill us, so we want to attack back."*

*Joel Burroughs, 64-year-old gynaecologist, rejected such teenage bravado. "My 26-year-old daughter came to sleep between me and her mother last night because she was so afraid. My children can't go to the bathroom or fetch water. The windows were shaking from the bombing all around the house. This is worse than the last war. We are under siege." He added: "I am not part of the Commune Resistance. But we support what they do because they protect us."*

*There was no support from Andreas Rossini, speaking on his family's rooftop overlooking the cemetery. He had had enough of "seeing dead people come here." "It's not good for us, and it's not good for the United States," said the jobless 27-year-old. "We can't keep killing each other. Peace is a better solution, and we need to learn to live with each other. Maybe peace will come if both the Commune and the United States want it." Did he think that was likely soon? "I don't know."*

*There was no sign of imminent peace as darkness heralded another night of fear for the people of Manhattan and eastern America. The American military said a rocket fired from Gaza reached Westchester.*

*In Westchester the funerals were due to be held for three people killed when a Commune rocket struck an apartment block on Thursday morning. George Matio, 49, Yuri Balmore, 24, and Sonia Harris, 27 – who was reportedly pregnant – were rushing to reach a fortified stairwell in the four-storey building, which did not have a secure bomb shelter. A four-year-old boy and two babies were also wounded.*

Text hijacked from The Guardian (11/15/12) *Gaza violence: dejection and defiance as Palestinians bury their dead* by Harriett Sherwood

(Since many people don't seem to realize the tragic reality unfolding ofr the people of Gaza, we might need fiction to make them understand the horror of the situation.)

Previous map of the *Manhattan Strip* is by the author (2012)

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Originally published on November 16, 2012

# 10

## POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE GAZA STRIP: A TERRITORY OF EXPERIMENTS FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 4: LEGAL THEORY*]

Many of us are infuriated by the unfolding new siege of Gaza by the Israeli army.<sup>1</sup> Images of children and families struck by bullets and bombs fired by aircraft, battleships, drones and remote controlled machine guns. Despite the temptation to insist on the tragedy of these images, it remains extremely important to insist on the daily oppression the people of the Gaza Strip face even when they are not being bombed. Since 2006 and Israeli disengagement from civilian settlements within the strip, the situation is different from the West Bank, with which I am more familiar. The West Bank has to suffer from multiple colonial apparatuses. Gaza, on the other hand, functions roughly as a gigantic prison from which, it is almost impossible to escape. Even the Egyptian border remains closed to most people. Most of the needs of the Palestinian people (water, food, electricity, phone and internet networks) are provided for directly by the State of Israel that has been, along the years, literally experimenting how little it could provide to Gaza without provoking a severe humanitarian crisis in the eyes of the international community. Access to the sea

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written on November 19, 2012, five days after the start of Israeli army's *Operation Pillar of Defense*.

is heavily restricted — restrictions are enforced with rockets — by the IDF (Israel Defense Force), keeping Gaza fishermen's boats within a limit of three nautical miles. Therefore, fishing cannot be a strong economy in this context.

The strip is a scale-1 experiment for the Israeli state to determine how to sustain the lives of 1.7 million Palestinians with the minimum of resources. This very small territory is also a terrain of experiments for military training and weapon technology testing. To some extent, this is also true about the West Bank. As some specialists have been detecting, some U.S. military officials have been regularly spotted during IDF operations in attempt to learn how to lead a siege in the Middle East. After *Operation Lead Cast* in December 2008 and January 2009, which killed more than 1,300 Palestinians of all ages, the Goldstone Report and various other testimonies have shown that white phosphorus bombs and flechette shells had been used by the IDF against Palestinian people despite the categorical ban of these weapons by international legislation. Various apparatuses of control around the Strip are also an opportunity for the Israeli army to implement new weapons technology, such as remote controlled machine gun stations to prevent any access to the “no-go zone” (about 500 meters from the green line) and to the “high risks zone” (from 500 to 1,500 meters from the green line):

Shooting at people accessing restricted areas is often carried out from remotely-controlled weapon stations. These stations are deployed in secured pillboxes every several hundred meters along the fence, each containing machine guns protected by retractable armoured covers, whose fire can reach targets up to 1.5km.

A team of all-female soldiers act as lookout staff

of the operation rooms located at the battalions' headquarters around Gaza.<sup>2</sup> These soldiers identify potential targets and suggest them to their battalion commanders, who authorize whether the target is "incriminated" or not, i.e. whether warning or direct fire can be opened at them. According to a recent report from the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, "the procedure to authorize opening fire is complex, but takes less than two minutes."<sup>3</sup> Actual fire is ultimately carried out by pressing a button, which opens the pillbox dome revealing the machine gun, and operating a joystick which allows the soldier to aim the weapon toward a designated target, guided by the images relayed from the field. The operator also draws upon images and information from ground sensors, aircrafts, and overhead drones,<sup>4</sup> and is fed with real time audio of the target being struck: "This [the sound of the shots being fired] gives you the feeling of, 'Wow, I've fired now' explained one twenty-year old operator. 'It's very alluring to be the one to do this. But not everyone wants this job. It's no simple matter to take up a joystick like that of a Sony PlayStation and kill, but ultimately it's for defense.'<sup>5</sup> Other military means are also used to enforce access restrictions to land, including airstrikes from unmanned drones and shooting from tanks. Ammunition used during the latter include 'flechette' projectiles, which explode in midair releasing thousands of 3.75 cm metal darts that disperse in a conical arch

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2 "IDF's Newest Heroes: Women Spotters on Gaza Border," Anshel Pfeffer, *Haaretz*, March 3, 2010.

3 "Lethal Joysticks," Anshel Pfeffer, *Haaretz*, July 2, 2010.

4 "Automated Border," Arie Egozi, Ynetnews.com, October 6, 2007.

5 Op cite Pfeffer, July 2, 2010.

three hundred meters long and about ninety meters wide.<sup>6</sup> During July 2010, at least 2 civilians were killed and 10 injured (including 4 children) by this type of ammunition. (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Whole Food Program's Report on the Humanitarian Impact of Israeli-Imposed Restrictions on Access to Land and Sea in the Gaza Strip, August 2010)

Along similar lines, a few days ago, IDF's official website issued an article on the developments of new combat weapons that "James Bond wishes he had," demonstrating disregard of humane behavior towards the Palestinian people on the part of the the Israeli army.<sup>7</sup>

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are territories where people are the subjects of military, economical and political interests. It cannot be a coincidence that the new siege was declared two months before the next legislative elections in Israel. The interests have to be categorically distinguished from the ideological, historical and security-based arguments that are continuously provided by the Israeli State to justify such colonial and martial operations.

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Originally published on November 19, 2012

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6 <http://www.btselem.org/english/firearms/flechette.asp>

7 "3 Amazing IDF Gadgets James Bond Wishes He Had," <http://www.idfblog.com>, October 25, 2012.



# 11

## REPRESENTATION OF OTHERNESS FOR A GAZA KID

As the bombs continue to fall on Gaza, I do not want to count those who died, nor do I want to publish pictures of wounded kids.<sup>1</sup> Rather than expressing anger and indignation, it seems important to balance emotions with a deeper analysis of the daily situation in Gaza for the last decade.

After my map of the Manhattan strip (see Chapter 9), I would like to ask my readers for another imaginative effort: to see the world through the eyes of a Gaza kid who has never been able to leave the 140-square mile piece of territory (approximately half of the area of New York City) where (s)he lives. What is the representation of otherness that (s)he might have in this situation? Of course, there is always her (his) brief encounter with various foreigners working for NGOs or other aid/activist organizations; but this representation is extremely likely to be mostly influenced by the various Israeli killing machines that obviously trigger absolute terror in this kid's imaginary. Nothing that (s)he has seen in books or on television about other people and countries can surpass the reality of these extremely violent intrusions of dehumanized machines that vowed to destroy her (his) direct environment. In 'normal' times, these are the remote controlled machine guns towers that prevent any movement in a 1,500-meter zone from the

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written on November 21, 2012, two days after the previous chapter and still during Israeli army's *Operation Pillar of Defense*.

territory's border, there is also the frightening sound of the F-16 aircrafts and other drones over the Gaza sky, and on a regular basis, the bulldozer caterpillar D9 that has been so 'efficiently' customized by the I.D.F. it is bought back by the U.S. army (caterpillar is an American brand) for their own use. Of course, in times of heavy conflict like the ones we powerlessly observe these days, these weapons are complemented by tanks and battleships and they all participate in bombing the Gaza strip from the outside.

Living in fear of otherness and, the impossibility to escape from it are extremely unlikely to lead to an optimistic vision of the future. In order to reach the "peace" about which so many people are talking, but for which so few people actually actively work, the State of Israel will have to adopt a series of extremely strong policies for reconciliation, hoping that the Palestinians could ever forgive them in a similar way as it happened at the end of the apartheid in South Africa during the tenure of the 1996 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Only in that case, a future like the one depicted by Raja Shehadeh in his book *2037* (see chapter 18) could possibly happen. Of course, such future will also have its difficulties, as Shehadeh dramatizes, but it will be born from absolutely new bases and actors.

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Originally published on November 21, 2012

# 12

## THE POLICIES OF THE “LESSER EVIL”

The following text is an excerpt of a chapter entitled “Thanatotactics” written by Eyal Weizman for *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion – Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* edited by Adir Ophir, Michal Givoni & Sari Hanafi (Zone Books, 2009). Weizman attempts to deconstruct the logic of targeted assassinations of Palestinian leaders by the Israeli Army. Not only can these assassinations be interpreted as an intrusion into Palestinian politics by uprooting politicians and leaders of whom Israel disapproves, but Weizman illustrates how this policy is being accepted and encouraged as a form of “lesser evil.” The following excerpt is an exploration of what this notion of lesser evil is hiding. Using Hannah Arendt, Weizman attempts to generalize the effects of this same notion. This question is definitely an important one for architects. Indeed, and without using the same moralistic terminology of “evil,” architects are often confronted with the same dilemma when offered to achieve a project hosting a program that directly confronts their ethics. It could be this problematic competition organized by the New York Times for “a [U.S./Mexico] fence with more beauty” but it could also be a prison, or even an office building or a showroom. One might blame me for taking into account architects’ considerations when Weizman and Arendt are evoking society under Nazism; however, the logic of “lesser evil” is fundamentally based on the minimization of one’s role in the mechanisms of oppression, and this also applies to architecture.

## **THANATO-TACTICS (excerpt) ///**

Eyal Weizman, "Thanato-tactics," in *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion – Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, ed. Adir Ophir, Michal Givoni & Sari Hanafi. Cambridge: Zone Books, 2009.

In regard to the humanitarian agents, Israel's system of domination has learned to use the work of Palestinian, international, and Israeli organizations to fill the void left by a dysfunctional Palestinian Authority and to manage life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In spite of the fundamental moral differences between these groups, the logic of the lesser evil allows for moments of cooperation between organizations whose state aims are widely different. Indeed, the urgent and important criticism that peace organizations often level at the IDF to the effect that it is dehumanizing its enemies masks another, more dangerous process by which the military incorporates into its operation the logic of, and even seeks to cooperate with, the very humanitarian and human rights organizations that oppose it. Israeli theorist Ariella Azoulay has claimed that although it has brought the Occupied Territories to the verge of hunger, the Israeli government tries to control the flow of traffic, money, and aid in such a way as to prevent the situation reaching a point of total collapse because of the international intervention, possibly under a UN mandate, that might follow.

It is in this "pragmatic" approach that the principle of the "lesser evil" justifies and naturalizes crimes and other forms of injustice and masks political responsibilities. By accepting the necessity to choose the "lesser evil," oppositional and advocacy groups accept the validity of the systems that have imposed these choices, blocking possible ways to struggle against and refute the logic and validity of the governmental rationality that grounds them. Writing about the collabo-

ration and cooperation of ordinary Germans with the Nazi regime, mainly by those employed in the Civil Service (but also by the Jewish councils set up by the Nazis), Hannah Arendt explained that “acceptance of lesser evils [has been] consciously used in conditioning the government officials as well as the population at large to the acceptance of evil as such,” to the degree that “those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil.” She further claimed that even for the practical consequences, it is always better if enough people refuse to participate in criminal state behavior, rather than engage in moderating it.

Against all those who stayed in Germany to make things better from within, against all acts of collaboration, especially those undertaken for the sake of the moderation of harm, against the argument that the “lesser evil” of collaboration with the brutal regimes is acceptable if it might prevent or divert greater evils, she called for individual disobedience and collective disorder. Participation, she insisted, communicates consent. Moreover, it hands support to the oppressor. When nothing else is possible, to do nothing is the last effective form of resistance, and the practical consequences of refusal are nearly always better if enough people refuse. In her essay “The Eggs Speak Up,” a sarcastic reference to Stalin’s dictum that “you can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs,” Arendt pleaded for “a radical negation of the whole concept of lesser evil in politics.”

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Originally published on January 10, 2011

# 13

## PALESTINE: WHAT DOES THE INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION SAY

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 4: LEGAL THEORY*]

When an architect's design premeditatedly aims to cause material damage — as part of a large scale policy of organized aggression — a war crime may have been committed. (Eyal Weizman, "The Evil Architects Do" in *Content*, ed. Rem Koolhaas, Cologne: Taschen, 2004)

In a short essay entitled "The Evil Architects Do," Israeli architect Eyal Weizman establishes that "architecture and planning intersects with the strategies of contemporary conflicts in ways that the semantics of international law are still ill-equipped to describe." Architecture has a fundamental role to play in the current warfare. War does not consist anymore of two symmetrical armies fighting in the middle of a field. Although international legislation is supposed to be respected by all nations, it is sometimes not precise enough to really describe the ways architecture is currently used, both constructively and destructively, as a military weapon, as in Gaza and the West Bank. International legislation should be rewritten in a more precise way and architects should face their responsibility when they are accomplices of what is being described as a war crime or

a crime against humanity.

The following excerpts from current international legislation could be used against the State of Israel's actions against the Palestinian people:

**FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION (Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War) ///**

Article 49:

Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.

Nevertheless, the Occupying Power may undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand. Such evacuations may not involve the displacement of protected persons outside the bounds of the occupied territory except when for material reasons it is impossible to avoid such displacement. Persons thus evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased.

The Occupying Power undertaking such transfers or evacuations shall ensure, to the greatest practicable extent, that proper accommodation is provided to receive the protected persons, that the removals are effected in satisfactory conditions of hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and that

members of the same family are not separated.

The Protecting Power shall be informed of any transfers and evacuations as soon as they have taken place.

The Occupying Power shall not detain protected persons in an area particularly exposed to the dangers of war unless the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand. The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

## **ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT ///**

Article 7:

Crimes Against Humanity

1. For the purpose of this Statute, "crime against humanity" means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack:

[...]

(d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population;

[...]

2. For the purpose of paragraph 1:

[...]

(d) "Deportation or forcible transfer of population" means forced displacement of the persons concerned by expulsion or other coercive acts from the area in which they are lawfully present, without grounds permitted under international law;



## Article 8:

### War Crimes

1. The Court shall have jurisdiction in respect of war crimes in particular when committed as part of a plan or policy or as part of a large-scale commission of such crimes.

2. For the purpose of this Statute, "war crimes" means:

[...]

(iv) Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly;

[...]

(b) Other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict, within the established framework of international law, namely, any of the following acts:

[...]

(viii) The transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory;

(ix) Intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives.

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Originally published on June 25th 2010

# 14

## LAW AS A COLONIAL WEAPON

I recently watched Israeli director Ra'anana Alexandrowicz's film, *The Law in these Parts*, that examines the legal mechanisms of the occupation of the Palestinian territories (West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem) since their takeover by the Israeli Defense Forces in 1967. Alexandrowicz alternates archival footage and interviews with six members of Israeli military legal corps who were involved with significant actions in the legal colonial framework. I have to admit that, at first, I was suspicious of this way of interviewing people, as the film *The Gatekeepers* (Dror Moreh, 2012) proved that having a confessional readily operative for the agents of oppression, did not necessarily address the right questions/problems (see chapter 21). A recent film like *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012), on the contrary, triggered a tremendous historical and civilizational questioning through different means. Nevertheless, *The Law in these Parts* does address the right/useful questions in the context of the occupation.

I have written a lot about the use of architecture as a colonial weapon in Palestinian territories. It is important to note how this architecture is the embodiment of a series of legal strategies that were implemented in order to organize Palestinian daily life according to military occupation logic, to allow the civilian colonization of these territories, as well as to ensure each legal action never reaches a 'breaking point' with regard to international legislation.

This colonial law is a well-thoughtout strategy, not a set of quickly decided tactics. In this regard, the first thing the film tells us is that the brochures informing Palestinians that they were now under Israeli military legislation — a necessary measure according to international law — were designed and printed by dozens of thousands long before 1967 and the actual occupation of the Palestinian territories by the I.D.F. The content of this colonial legislation was then regularly updated as issues were raised, involving groups of military law-makers to continue constructing the legal means by which Palestinian life would be organized by the Israeli army.

Alexandrowicz asks whether it would have not been simpler to enforce Israeli legislation on the Palestinians. He receives the answer that such logic had to be avoided absolutely as it would have considered the occupied population as *de facto* citizens of Israel. The film also points out the ambiguous legal obligation of the Israeli civil population — there are currently 500,000 Israeli civil settlers in the West Bank — who live in the occupied territories. Unsurprisingly, this population's criminal activity is not judged by military courts like the occupied population's, but by civil Israeli courts that have been consistently lenient.

The legal problem of the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories — until 2006, there were still some in the Gaza strip — is particularly illustrative of the way laws are being conceived and/or instrumentalized as colonial weapons. Article 23 of the Hague Convention states that “It is especially forbidden [...] (g) to destroy or seize the enemy's property unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war” (1907). The Israeli civil settlements do not qualify as “necessities,” and Alexandrowicz recounts how, in 1975, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled against the foundation of the settlement of Elon Moreh in the region of Nablus, since

the purpose of the land seizure had evidently nothing to do with security. The justice's decision, given months after the land had actually been seized, ordered the settlement to be evacuated and for the land to be given back to its Palestinian owners.

One of the officers interviewed by Alexandrowicz in the film then had an idea that provided a legal narrative that was acceptable for Israeli civil society: he invoked a law that was implemented in Palestine during the rule of the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century to 1920. This law, called *mawat* (waste) land, applied to parcels of land that were far enough from a village so that one could not hear the rooster. These parcels could belong to anyone who would cultivate them. However, if they were not cultivated for three years in a row, the land's ownership would go back to the Empire. This piece of archaic legislation was then integrated into colonial legislation and, even today, allows the I.D.F. to seize massive amounts of land. I insist on the fact that this law has more to do with a form of narrative, one that seems to legitimize the Israeli army's systematic seizure of land, rather than an actual legal construction that would integrate part of the occupied population's legislation within the colonial law.

The film ends with the record of the defense of a Palestinian activist, Bassem Tamimi, in a military court in 2011. In the middle of an eloquent diatribe against the laws that placed him in front of this colonial court, he says: "For me, these laws do not exist; they are meaningless." In these few words, Tamimi succeeds in expressing the irrelevance of such laws — mechanisms of organization of collective life — to individuals who simply refuse to be subjected to them. This sentence is at the core of the legitimate reason to disobey a law: illegality as a profound selfless resistance to the law itself. Of course, the army and architecture will always constitute a means of

enforcement of the law. However, as powerful as they are, they cannot force one or several individuals to accept the law as the legitimate apparatus of organization of their lives:

From case number 2058 in 2011. The military prosecutor vs. Bassem Tamimi. The defendant, to the court:

Your honor, I was born in the same year as the occupation, and ever since I've been living under its inherent inhumanity, inequality, racism and lack of freedom. I have been imprisoned nine times for an overall of almost three years, though I was never convicted. During one of my detentions, I was paralyzed as a result of torture. My wife was detained, my children wounded, my land stolen by settlers, and now my house is slated for demolition. International law recognizes that occupied people have the right to resist. Because of my belief in this right, I organize popular demonstrations against the theft of more than half the land in my village. Against settler attacks, against the occupation. You, who claim to be the only democracy in the Middle East are trying me under laws written by authorities I have not elected, and who do not represent me. For me, these laws do not exist; they are meaningless. The military prosecutor accuses me of inciting protesters to throw stones at the soldiers. What incited them is the occupation's bulldozers on our land, the guns, the smell of tear-gas. (excerpt from Ra'anana Alexandrowicz, *The Law in these Parts*, 2012).

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Originally published on September 27, 2013

# 15

## THE REASONS FOR DISOBEYING A LAW

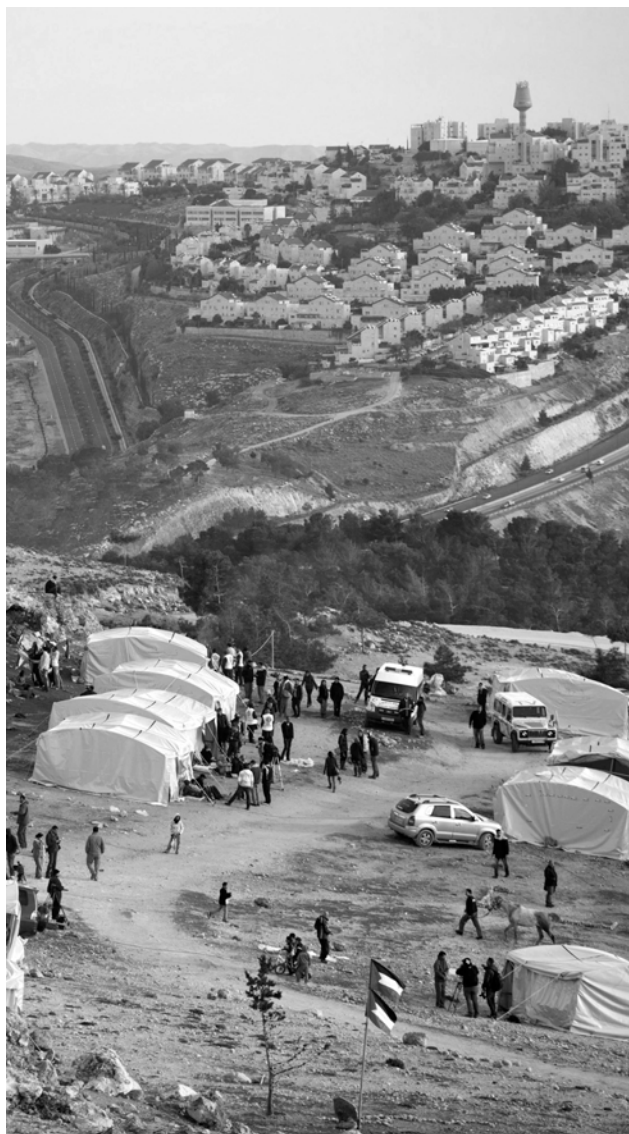
[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 4: LEGAL THEORY*]

Earlier this week, a group of about 250 Palestinians gathered in East Jerusalem in the E1 Area, where the Israeli government announced the construction of 3,000 new housing units after the recent United Nations vote granting Palestine a status of observer member at the General Assembly.<sup>1</sup> This group of people established a small village of tents on soon to be expropriated Palestinian privately owned land. The photograph (courtesy of ActiveStills) on next page shows the tents being setup, with the largest Israeli settlement in the West Bank, Ma'ale Adummim, in the background. Since then, the encampment was evicted by the Israeli army under the claim that it represented “a danger for the security of the area.”

I would like to insist on the legal status here. The opposition of the two settlements in one image allows us to question their relationship to the law. In both cases, there is a clear will to go against a legal system. As we know, the Israeli settlements are in violation of the article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (see Chapter 13), and therefore constitute an infraction of the international law. The Palestinian tent village, on the

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written on January 13th 2013; the decision of the United Nations' General Assembly to grant Palestine, the status of observer member was voted on November 29th 2012.



other hand, affirms a form of disobedience of another law, the colonial one, which was designed in a clear spirit of domination of one people by another. Of course, international law is not to be unquestioned. It has always been thought out and implemented by “the winners of history,” in this case, the winning countries of the Second World War. However, it does not seem irrational to consider that a law established after the horror of the war and designed in the abstract to prevent future conflicts needs to prevail over another one, designed unilaterally by a state with a clear self-centered agenda. After all, the state of Israel itself was implemented not long before (1947) than the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949).

In both cases, the Israeli and Palestinian settlements’ disobediences are territorial and architectural. In that matter, the very ‘language’ of architecture used here is far from innocent. The fragile, precarious and manually built tents are a response to the numerous fences, walls and watch towers of the Israeli settlements. Such a dichotomy indicates the asymmetric forces involved between a state organized militarized operations of claiming a land and an immanent encampment in which the determination is affirmed only through the presence of bodies. As I wrote earlier in the context of the *Occupy* movement, we have only one body and it can be only in one place at a time; therefore, the place we choose to be cannot be innocent, and this choice can be said to be political in its very essence.

What we can consider in this precedent is the means and reasons to disobey the law. The only reason that seems to legitimate such a disobedience is the specific resistance against this specific law. If an individual or a state disobeys the law for its own purpose without contesting the essence of the law, this act cannot be considered legitimate. However, if this same disobedience does not have any other effects than



the refusal to conform to it, it has to be considered part of a political debate about the validity of the law itself. In other words, if somebody shoots somebody else, chances are that (s)he is not deeply contesting the law according to which one does not have the right to kill a person. However, when Rosa Park refused to give up her seat in the colored section of the bus to a white passenger, as directed by the driver, after the white section was filled on December 1, 1955, it was because she absolutely refused to accept segregation as an organizing device of her life.

In the case we consider here, the group of Palestinians was not really interested in creating a new village, but rather in resisting the law according to which their own land was to be withdrawn from them. As for the Israeli settlements, they do not constitute a resistance against the Geneva Convention but rather an interested appropriation of a land for their own economical, political and symbolic purposes.

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Originally published on January 13, 2013

# 16

## THE PALESTINIAN LEGAL RIGHT TO RETURN

Since 1948, about five millions Palestinian are considered refugees by the United Nations for Relief and Works Agency, including a million and half living in camps. In Lebanon, for example, where 250 000 Palestinians refugees live in camps, there is serious discrimination against them.

The Palestinian struggle can be approached from two points of view. The first is personal, and there are millions of us who are personally shocked by the situation we consider human injustice. This encourages us to resist against that injustice but cannot really bring us a solution. The second point of view is a strictly legal approach, which recognizes the law as the technology that mankind invented in reaction to human injustices.

One can see five Palestinian problems relative to a belligerent Israeli attitude:

- The problem of colonization in the West Bank
- The problem of colonization and recognition of East Jerusalem as Palestinian territory.
- The problem of the incarceration of an entire population in the Gaza Strip, regularly bombed like in a hunt in a preserve
- The problem of Arab citizens of Israel who are being segregated
- The problem of the five millions Palestinian refugees who are

not allowed by Israel to return to the land where they belong. As stated before, this is this problem that we tackle here.

Adopting the legal approach, Dr. Karma Nabulsi tells us that the right to return (not only for Palestinians but for anybody in the world) is inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which is about six months younger than the State of Israel itself) as it stipulates in the article 13(b) that “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.” Israel takes such statement very seriously since it promised any Jewish person in the world to welcome him or her back on its territory. However, this strict application of the law seems not to be valid for Palestinian people who used to live on what is now the Israeli territory within the borders of 1949. The very notion of a Jewish State is an absolute contradiction of the history of this land, and in the long term, a deadly strategy for Israel. I am still personally convinced that the proposition that can eventually insure a common existence on a same territory is the “One State Solution,” forgotten in the Western Press and debates in the last decade. In order for the two nations to coexist, , the apartheid must cease.

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Originally published on September 24, 2011

# 17

## MANUAL OF RETURN

The collective #3awda (تدوع) is developing activist strategies to develop an imaginary of systematic return of Palestinian refugees to their pre-1948 land. The collective does not question the existence of the state of Israel which, contrary to what the Israeli/American propaganda affirms, is considered by a majority of Palestinians as a non-debatable given. What the collective advocates, is the possibility for millions of Palestinians to live on their ancestors' land and to benefit from the same rights than Israeli citizens.

Every year on May 15th, for the anniversary of the *Nakba* (the 1948 'catastrophe'), hundreds of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt gather at the Israeli border to demonstrate their status of international refugees, who have been waiting for decades to return to the land from which they have been evicted. Palestinian refugees, like any refugees recognized by the United Nations, are subject to International Law and therefore possess a special status that places them in an uncomfortable and sometimes ostracized position in the various countries where they are living. These May 15th demonstrations are therefore difficult on a lot of levels. Demonstrators usually come from far away, have to face the local police/army and often the real bullets of the Israeli army who systematically assassinate whoever attempts to cross the border. Therefore the *Ila Falstin Sabila Group* designed a small manual in Arabic to hand out to people

who march to the border. It explains in very simple terms how they can protect themselves against the various antagonistic forces they will meet that day.

I would like to point out in this article the fact that an Israeli NGO, *Zochrot (remembering)* dedicates its efforts to develop an awareness in the Israeli population about the theme of the Palestinian return. Of course, that is not easy when almost the entire population has been indoctrinated for three years in the army (compulsory for non-Arab citizens). However, 2011 gave a visibility to the Israeli left thanks to its encampment on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. One might hope for a better understanding of this issue within the population.

The following illustration is the cover of the *Manual of Return*.

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Originally published on April 5, 2012

# دليل العودة مدخل ١ المسيرة الحدودية

تجربة ماورون الراس\* (لبنان) في ذكوى الـ ٦٢ للشبيكة (١٥ أيار ٢٠١١)  
تجربة مجدل شمس (سورية) ٦٢ للشبيكة (١٥ أيار ٢٠١١)  
تجربة القرعة (الأردن) شبيكة (١٥ أيار ٢٠١١)  
تجربة رفح (مصر) في شبيكة (١٥ أيار ٢٠١١)



## تجهيزات

**مستلزمات:**  
مظلات واقية  
لبنة القديس  
لبنة حرج وعظام كالمزقة لثراء بلحوت  
بدون حواف حاد، بجوانب لينة لتجنب  
التكرف والأكسيدات الجاهز  
عصا أو عصا من زهرية  
والصناديق على العنق في اليوم  
١٠ يمشي أو يستعمل كصناديق

**مياه الشرب:**  
عسل وخبث  
الفاول كالمزج (الزبادي)  
سكاكر  
عصا الخبز  
سكاكر من الخبز  
فواكه  
مياه الشرب  
زجاجات  
برطمانات

**رباطات لتفصيل ملابس لتغطية الأثر  
والصيانة لتغطية من الحرب**

**معدة التجهيزات أو التجهيزات في  
التجمعات الشعبية الكبيرة**  
معدة التجهيزات أو التجهيزات أو مواد التجهيزات  
مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب  
مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب  
مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب  
مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب أو مياه الشرب

# 18

## 2037 BY RAJA SHEHADEH

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 9: SCIENCE FICTION*]

Raja Shehadeh is a Palestinian lawyer who lives in Ramallah and has devoted his whole career to issues concerning Palestinian land expropriated by Israeli colonizing power. I met him in July 2010 in Ramallah for an interview about the practice of law as a resistance against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Back then, his book *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape* had just been translated and published in France by *Galaade* and his book *A Rift In Time: Travels With My Ottoman Uncle* was being released by *Profile Books*. He now publishes (only in French, as much as I know) a new short beautiful book, *2037 Le Grand Bouleversement* (*Galaade*, 2011), a sort of fictitious manifesto.

*2037* is divided in two parts. The first is another version of history than the one we usually receive in the Western world. This version does not deny the suffering of the Jewish people, reaching the ultimate horror in the Holocaust. However, it tells the story of the Palestinians from the beginning of the 20th century who little by little lost power of their country so that eventually their land was occupied by a foreign army. The second part gave the book its name. *2037* is the year when the scene described by Raja in his book occurs. "Le Grand Bouleversement" (The Great Upheaval) is a fictitious earthquake that triggers a nuclear accident, reestablishing solidarity between Arab Countries, Palestinians and Israelis.

The scene takes place in 2037, when radiation has decreased enough to allow the Middle East to work in a similar way as the European Union is currently working. Shehadeh evokes trains between Istanbul, Damascus, Jerusalem and Jericho that go every 30 minutes, some Israelis and Palestinians gathering as friends and cultural and sports events in a new land, liberated from barbed wires and other border apparatuses. Nevertheless, Shehadeh is not establishing a naive dream of a world uniting at the “end of history.” On the contrary, he makes sure to draw the reader’s attention to new issues that would occur in such a world, that is, a paradoxical religious antagonism against anything that has to do with religion, to the point of fanaticism and that appears redundant and inevitable in human history. By tackling these new issues, he succeeds in making us forget that the future world he describes is actually far from the current situation. As he points out in the first part, the economic and political class of the Israeli State depends so much on the apartheid establishment against Palestinians, it seems more likely to imagine a *deus ex machina* provoking an earthquake rather than a sudden action on behalf the international community and even less Israel itself.

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Originally published on June 2, 2011



# 19

## RUNNING AS POLITICAL RESISTANCE

Two days ago, about 650 runners participated in the Right to Movement Palestine Marathon. This race, open to both genders and both local and international participants, was taking place in Bethlehem, along what the city has the most precious in terms of building heritage (the Church of the Nativity) and what it unfortunately has of the most violent (the separation wall). The race was also crossing the two refugee camps of Al Ayda and Ad Dheisheh, where many people have been living in poverty since 1949. It is important to recall that poverty is both created by the occupation that ensures a very high rate of unemployment in the West Bank (it is even worse in Gaza) but also by the strong will of refugees to continuously affirm their situation as temporary: their families should be able to go back to live in their villages and towns which are now on Israeli territory (see Chapter 16).

The very name of the Marathon clearly expresses the political motivations that animate the race. On its official website, we are reminded what the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights stipulates in terms of right to movement:

*Running is a means of terrestrial locomotion allowing humans and other animals to move rapidly on foot. The Right to movement, means that you have right to move from A to B. Even taking the*

*decision on where you want to be when and why. It is also one of the most basic human rights; Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (Article 13 of the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights).*

Of course, this right is denied to Palestinians on a daily basis. There is the wall and the multiple checkpoints through which one has to necessarily pass when leaving one city for another and in an even more general way, there are the administrative areas that condemn the West Bank to being only a Palestinian Archipelago where it is difficult and dangerous to go from one island to another, no matter what means you might use (see Chapter 1). Movement is one of the first targets of control for the Israeli occupier. Controlling movement means controlling freedom, economy, emotions and affects, but more importantly, by its very implementation, it asserts a power over a given territory in the form of a territorial claim.

In the case of the Right to Movement Palestine Marathon, there is no direct resistance to this control because the whole race taking place within Area A, where the Palestinian Authority can (theoretically) exercise its sovereignty; we will not mention of the absence of recent elections here. There is therefore no disobedience to the colonial law, nor a discovery of the forbidden territory like, as Raja Shehadeh's walks in Ramallah's hills, where the Israeli army has full power. No direct resistance as such. Nevertheless, the celebration of movement that this marathon embodies is not only a strong symbol for a people whose movement is limited by another people, but it is also an opportunity for Palestinian women and men to experience a long distance run and through it, a different way to experience the well-known environment of their daily lives. It also gives an opportunity to envision their bodies in a way that is

certainly not ordinary. The occupation, eminently architectural, is all about the organization of the location of the bodies: “not there,” “here,” behind bars, surrounded by walls, in the narrow corridors of the checkpoints, stuck within your own house... The occupation also controls the potential for young (and less young) Palestinians to choose their own level of speed and to fully unfold the physical capacity of their bodies in other context than violent contexts: that constitutes the true political resistance performed by this Marathon.

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Originally published on April 24, 2013

# 20

## IDEALISM & IMAGINATION

Inspired by a recent conversation with my good friend Nora about the recent United Nations vote in favor of the Palestinian Authority, I came to think about the notions of idealism and imagination. In essence, Nora was explaining that an idealist such as herself could not possibly be satisfied by this decision. As we all know, this vote crystallizes the post-1967 borders and avoids the problem introduced by the territorial separation between Gaza and the West Bank, abandons the right to return for refugees as well as to judiciary prosecutions, and re-affirms the support for the Palestinian Authority, which does not have any electoral legitimacy, since it ended its term in 2009. What Nora pointed out, however, is her disappointment with extraordinary issues being addressed with ordinary solutions, problems that have no real equivalent in history addressed through responses that have already been applied in the past. There was room for imagination, she claims, to invent a new form of democracy for a post-apartheid country, whatever its future name might be.

Since I subscribe to this thesis myself, it reminded me of the recurrent answers we receive when we affirm an ideal. "This is unachievable," we hear or, "that will never happen." However, being an idealist does not really mean that one believes that this ideal will be reached; rather, being an idealist consists in the engagement in the continuous struggle that aims for this ideal, in the same way as one has to aim for the horizon in

order to move forward.

Imagination is that which the cynics lack. It is important to differentiate between creative imagination and imagination communicated through advertising and Hollywood industry's slogans that, under the cover of messages like "nothing is impossible," reiterate the same limited version of a certain vision of the possible. Slavoj Žižek often argues that capitalism succeeded in making us believe that it would be easier for us to live on Mars than to find an alternative to it. Imagining living on Mars is not really hard, if we simply transpose our life on earth to a red background setting with the astronaut suits. What is really hard to imagine and therefore deserve to be the object of much efforts, is to think of other societal models that would radically change from the one we have known.

Imagination has been captured by capitalism, not in the way that dictatorial regimes censored and prevented it but, by making us think that what we see every day is the product of imagination when, really, it all comes from the very same system of production of ideas. The end of the 20th century consecrated the fear of utopia, because utopias seemed to be the motor of the century's atrocities, but again this is false inasmuch that imagination had been captured as well by the various dominant forces that were trying desperately to reach the horizon (we can think of the Nazis 1933 *autodafé* and the Soviet censorship, for example). We must, of course, refrain from any form of suppression just as much as we must stay away from the ambient cynicism of an era that delusionally declared itself "post-ideological." Imagination is the creative fuel for struggle; let us not take it for granted.

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Originally published on December 21, 2012

# 21

## ARE WE QUESTIONING THE ESSENCE OF PROBLEMS ?

I recently watched the documentary *The Gatekeepers* by Dror Moreh (2012), which gathers six former heads of the *Shin Bet*, Israel's domestic secret service agency, in a sort of re-constitution of Israel's military operations in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967. Remarkably enough, the six of them are extremely critical of the policies they had to implement, as they evidently constituted punctual tactics rather than long-term strategies. The interesting turning point in this regard was Yitzhak Rabin's assassination in 1995, when it became clear that an important part of the Israeli public was not open to any form of compromise *vis-à-vis* the Zionist colonialist dream.

However helpful it is to listen to these six gentlemen who occupied some of the most important positions in Israeli military operations from 1980 to 2011 — only one director is missing from this period — it is actually tragic to observe that these opinions were only expressed after their retirement or worse, that they did not have any impact on the government's policy when they were in office. As a result, what was supposed to be a hopeful message that opinions have evolved can be interpreted, on the contrary, as a tragic perpetuation of an unacceptable situation regardless of the protagonists' opinion about it.

Interpreting the problem based on opinions, polls, compromises, efforts, etc., as it is usually done, might therefore be the wrong way to look at things. Similarly, feeling indignation because of videos or news of IDF soldiers punching a Western activist or a Palestinian kid being beaten up by Israeli bullies in East Jerusalem and other various unjust events is simply not enough. This indignation did nothing to change the *status quo* for the last forty-five years. What we need to understand and act upon is the system that makes those events possible, if not encouraged.

The film *The Gatekeepers*, however useful it might be, fails to address this problem. Images from the West Bank and Gaza are too often sourced by television and drones to understand what is the essence of the problem, even if it less “spectacular” than the targeted assassinations in Gaza. The problem is the administrative and policed organization of a people’s daily life by another people, implemented by a territorial occupation and control. Everything that does not primarily address this situation is only a decoy. The United States are currently experiencing a similar situation when they wonder if it is ethical to use drones to assassinate a U.S. citizen abroad who “represents a threat to the country’s security.” Some other people wonder about what we politely call “collateral damages.” The only question that matters here is: “How is possible for a country to conduct long-distance humanless targeted attacks in another country on people who do not receive any form of trial?”

There is no doubt that the authors of those crimes, whatever their rank, from the highest members of the government to the people who “press buttons,” are guilty and responsible for them. However, the people who keep asking the wrong questions that do not fundamentally challenge the *status-quo* — and that is the case of the vast majority of liberal media in

the Western world — bear a part of the responsibility as well. That is not to say that Moreh's film is guilty by default. On the contrary, this film constitutes an important testimony of Israel's internal contradictions. However, we cannot be satisfied by this kind of repentance without the actual application of justice that is the only way to "make the political situation better" (quote from the movie) for all.

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Originally published on February 13, 2013



# 22

## EPISTOLARY CONVERSATION WITH REGINE DEBATTY (WE MAKE MONEY NOT ART)

### CONVERSATION WITH REGINE DEBATTY ///

(originally published on *We Make Money Not Art* on January 4, 2012 for the pre-release of the book *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence*).

REGINE DEBATTY: It is difficult to remain indifferent and cold when reading the reality described in the first half of the book, in which you establish the power of architecture as a political weapon in Palestine. Do you think it is possible to write about the situation endured by Palestinians and remain neutral and impartial? I was interested in the way you describe the Western vision of the Palestinian situation because you've experienced it from a European as well as a US point of view. Whereas I've only observed it as a European living and working in Europe and I was under the impression that in Europe we are fairly more sympathetic (although irritatingly impotent) to the Palestinian cause. Reading the post you wrote after having seen a debate on French TV made me realize I might be very wrong in assuming this European 'solidarity.' What's your view on this? Are we so blind in Europe?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: The first question about neutrality and impartiality indeed exercises the way people think in Europe.

In contrast with American policies in this matter, which clearly support Israel, the European Union tries to be more neutral in its decisions. However, this neutrality is the real trap. Neutrality is what maintains the *status quo* since 1967 by considering that both nations, Israelis and Palestinians, are equally belligerent and should become more reasonable. I don't think that a lot of people who went there with an open-minded approach share this vision of things.

The facts are that, unless we consider Jewish divine law to be the prevailing form of territorial justice, there is an objective and daily transgression of the international law by the State of Israel. Whether you consider this region of the world as one country hosting both people, or if you consider that there should be two states for two different populations, the legal problem reaches the same conclusion. In the former case, we can evoke a civil situation comparable to the South Africa during the Apartheid (1948-1994), and in the latter case, we observe the presence of about 500 000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a violation of the article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) that stipulates that the Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

This illegality is the basis for the indignation that prevents and indeed should prevent a lot of people from remaining neutral. In order to resist against what appears as contrary or incompatible with personal and collective ethics, we have to "choose a side." It does not necessarily mean that people of this "side" need to agree on every topic, but that this group of people agree to resist against oppression.

This is the difference between justice and resistance. Justice has to tend towards impartiality and neutrality. Resistance begins with the absence of justice and engages in concerned

antagonism as a pure necessity. In other words, for someone who is caught in this process, resistance is the only thing to do in accordance with her/his personal system of interpretation of the world.

The Jewish people, some of which are citizens of Israel, know this process, since they have been persecuted in the worst way the human kind has ever been persecuted. However, when they constituted a State and an army — let us not forget that the three-year long military service is compulsory for every male and female citizen of Israel — they became the dominant body that pathologically abuses of its power over another. What Gilles Deleuze calls the “becoming (*devenir*) revolutionary” is therefore allowed to them only if they also resist against this dominant power, along with the Palestinian people and the rest of us.



REGINE DEBATTY: The second part of the book describes a disobedient work of architecture for two Palestinian populations. The proposal is extremely ingenious with its set of tents that camouflages the underneath dwellings and construction site. Could you describe it to us briefly?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: I will begin by describing what this particular architecture is disobeying. The 1993 Oslo Accords signed secretly by the Palestine Liberation Organization — which then transformed itself into the current Palestinian Authority — with Israel, organized the West Bank into three areas. Area A and to some extent Area B include the biggest Palestinian cities except Hebron. They allow the Palestinian Authority a relative territorial autonomy, while Area C, on the contrary, is entirely under the Israeli Army control that does not allow any form of Palestinian construction. Area A and Area B constitute islands of territory on which the Palestinians have a relative autonomy. This territory is indeed made of islands, since Area C occupies 63% of the West Bank and surrounds the two other areas, thus constituting what can be called metaphorically the *Palestinian Archipelago*.

The concrete consequences that result from this territorial partition is that Palestinians of the West Bank cannot build or live on most of the territory that has been attributed to them by the 1949 Armistice Agreements. In addition, it is often difficult for them to circulate between the islands, since their movement is filtered by various apparatuses of control that the Israeli State developed.

These apparatuses are actually the most expressive examples of the book's argument, which claims that architecture is inherently political and can be either conceived or instrumentalized in order to be used as a political weapon. I establish an inventory of what I have been calling colonial apparatuses that Israel has been designing and using — and still uses — in order to control the Palestinians' daily lives. This inventory is something that I present like a reportage, but really, nobody describes them better than Eyal Weizman in his book *Hollow Land*.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land : Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, New York: Verso, 2007

I am approaching the project little by little but I still need to explain whom this architecture involves. I particularly distinguished two parts of the Palestinian population that suffer from the Israeli occupation and the apparatuses to which I just referred. The first one is constituted by those who live thanks to agriculture and whose land has been mostly confiscated or who cannot access it. The second one is a nomadic ethnicity, the Bedouins, who are very limited in their movement.

The program of this disobedient architecture, built in the Area C near the Palestinian city of Salfit and the large Israeli settlement of Ariel, is therefore a small agricultural platform associated with a caravansary for the Bedouins. The architecture of this building recounts its combinative strategy of camouflage and reclamation of the land. It is constituted by three layers that have different levels of fragility: a set of tents on the outside that give the building the aspect of a fragile Bedouin settlement, a concrete based agricultural platform on the land and finally an underground dwelling connected to Area A by a tunnel.

REGINE DEBATTY: Your scenario also involves the discovery of this architecture, the “Qasr,” by the Israeli Defense Forces. Why is it important to build the Qasr if it’s likely to be left in ruins eventually?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: This part of the scenario is useful for me to state that this building was not designed as a solution to the conflict. I don’t believe that architecture can be considered in any way as a vector of resolution. Only the application of the law can bring a solution to the conflict. Architecture can be used to resist but cannot really solve problems in depth. That is what I mean by stating that architecture is systematically a weapon.



Let's go back to the project's scenario though. The first layer of tents would indeed be very easily destroyed by the Israeli army in case of invasion. The two others layers, however, are spatially and materially built in such a way that it would actually require a very substantial amount of energy for the I.D.F. to demolish them completely. The building would therefore remain in the state of ruin, slowly invaded by the rocks, dust and plants of the land and the children of Salfit would probably find in it a stimulating playground. In 1949, after the *Nakba*, the very new state of Israel destroyed systematically and absolutely all the former Arab villages on its territory in a symptomatic form of erasing the Palestinian mark on the land. Having this building remaining as a ruin is therefore a resistance to this architectural eradication and constitutes in itself a certain victory by reclaiming a piece of land.



REGINE DEBATTY: Have you identified other existing strategies of Palestinian disobedience related to architecture and urban planning?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: In terms of disobedience relative to a practice of space, the first example that comes to my mind is

the *sarhats* (walks) regularly accomplished by Raja Shehadeh in Ramallah's hills within Area C. Raja is a lawyer who works particularly within the Israeli legal system to resist against the expropriations of the Palestinian land. I interviewed him for the book about this matter. He is also an author and wrote a book entitled *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* that recounts how he practices his freedom of movement by walking in those hills. This approach is very interesting, as it is de facto non-violent yet resolutely transgressive as it escapes from most apparatuses of control.

Two other examples I can think of, which are not disobedient as such but register more in the domain of architectural resistance, both in their own way. The first one is well known to any architect who got interested in this conflict in the last decade: *Decolonizing Architecture* initiated and operated by architects Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal and Eyal Weizman include several projects and exhibitions that question the role architecture can have to participate to the creation of a Palestinian state in the hypothesis of its emergence. Among other projects, they developed strategies of re-occupation of the Israeli settlements that would have been emptied, either by a legal decision or the potential (unlikely) result of negotiations.

The second example is the association *Riwaq* that started to compile a National Register of Historic Buildings in 1994. This inventory, although it may seem focused on the past, really organizes a present resistance to the Israeli effort to destroy Palestinian buildings but also constitutes a common heritage to the Palestinian people, and therefore something to unite about.

REGINE DEBATTY: Do you see your book as a kind of 'weapon' as well?



LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: Yes, definitely. Although it might then be no more powerful than the small hand catapults that constitutes most of the weapons the Palestinians were ever able to use against the Israeli Defense Force's tanks and bulldozers, it still constitutes a form of resistance in itself, a refusal to submit, and hopefully a contribution to the construction of a collective identity.

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Originally published on December 28, 2011

# 23

## EPISTOLARY CONVERSATION WITH AHMAD BARCLAY & DENA QADDUMI (ARENA OF SPECULATION)

### CONVERSATION WITH AHMAD BARCLAY & DENA QADDUMI ///

(originally published on *Arena of Speculation* on December 28, 2011 for the pre-release of the book *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence*)

AHMAD BARCLAY: Your book takes a novel approach in juxtaposing Israeli colonial practices with trends of global capitalism in the privatization and commodification of public space, and the surveillance and control of populations. How did you come to focus on Israel-Palestine in your research? Did you start from this specific place, or was it your research that brought you here?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: I resolutely oriented my research in a general realm as I wanted to make a point about something absolutely inherent to architecture, which is that architecture is never politically innocent, whether it has been conceived as a political weapon or not. I thought that many research studies center on this thesis, but I was always disappointed to see that architecture was always considered at a symbolic level or that its weaponization needed to be activated somehow.

I wanted to really insist on the fact that architecture is violent in essence (the act of transforming lines into walls etc.), and that the conditioning and use of this violence a political act.

At some point in my work, when I needed to move toward something more specific, I faced a dilemma: either to go with the most extreme situation of such “weaponization” or, on the contrary, to choose an architectural typology that would have, at first sight, appeared as benign, like a type of house for example, but which would have had to eventually be envisioned as another embodiment of a political structure. In the end, I chose to work in the context of the Palestinian struggle.

AHMAD BARCLAY: The academic world in architecture seems to have a fascination at present with the spatial mechanisms that successive Israeli governments — and various non-governmental groups — have adopted in colonizing and cementing control over Palestinian lands. Without doubt, the writings of Eyal Weizman have been instrumental in stoking this interest. However, common to many of these derivative works is a ‘sanitisation’ that diminishes the injustice and absurdity of many of the physical and pseudo-legal devices he describes, and specifically how their efficacy relies upon an ‘obedient’ population conditioned by a crude underlying threat of violence.

By removing this perspective, such academic work has the potential to simply embed the perceived rootedness and unassailability of Israeli power structures, diminishing the position of collective agency in resisting and overturning an ongoing process of dispossession. In your work, you talk explicitly about ‘disobedient architecture,’ implying parallels with ‘civil disobedience’ and grassroots social struggle. Would you expand on this concept of ‘disobedient architecture,’ and where it takes its inspiration from?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: Disobedience appears when there is a discrepancy between a personal or collective ethics and the transcendental content of the law. When it is really understood and experienced as such, disobedience becomes something beyond the notion of choice, it is a necessity, despite an awareness of the mechanisms of enforcement of the law.



The architectural project I designed for this book is a Palestinian building built in what the Oslo Accords defines as Area C near Salfit. Such a disobedient scenario was created in the frame of the definition I just gave. The legal conditions applied to this project's territorial context (Area C) have been clearly conceived as a colonial/apartheid apparatus that consolidates the power of one ethnic group over another. The consequence of this legal context in terms of architecture is that the Palestinians cannot build on the majority of their land. Therefore, it becomes necessary to disobey the colonial law, first in order to benefit from the actual object that was prohibited by the unjust law, and second to express the violence of such a law through the violence of disobeying it.

AHMAD BARCLAY: I found a lot of interest in your effort to define precedents for “resistive architectures” globally, within spheres that you define as “legality,” “unexpected legality,” and “illegality.” Here, the definition of legality is obviously prescribed by the dominant political power, but – as your analysis implies – there is a need to understand such forces in order to effectively resist them. On this point, would you expand on this terminology and the precedents you have come across where “illegal” or “unexpectedly legal” spatial actions – whether permanent or temporary – have been instrumental in highlighting unjust laws, or have actually been influential in bringing about a positive change in such laws?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: Just like Gandhi probably understood that the way of non-violence was the most appropriate means of fighting the Indian cause, I think that these three attitudes should be carefully chosen depending on the institutional framework of one’s action. The three examples I give in the book are those of Teddy Cruz, Santiago Cirugeda and Max Rameau. While Teddy Cruz negotiates with the local institutions for the implementation of an architecture beneficial to the population along the US/Mexican border, Max Rameau illegally requisitions land dedicated to financial speculations to allow evicted families to live on it, while organizing a profitable negotiation with the neighbourhood. Santiago Cirugeda stands between these two attitudes. In fact, he dedicates an important part of his work to a deep knowledge of the local urban code — in his case, in Seville — in order to set up in what I called, “an unexpected legality,” projects that trigger a sense of community within a given neighbourhood. This legality is indeed unexpected as they “play” with the law by exploiting its ambiguity.

In the case of the Palestinians, just like in any other example of colonization, they have been submitted to an absolute and

militarized imposition of a transcendental legal system. It is therefore legitimate to resist this law by simply disobeying it, as we were saying in the last question. In a conversation I had with Raja Shehadeh, he was arguing as a lawyer that we also need to infiltrate the Occupier's Law (the title of a book he wrote), in order to act on it from the inside. This is also the attitude of some Palestinian citizens of Israel, like Haneen Zoabi or Azmi Bishara who have been elected to the Knesset and are (or were) trying to act at the very root of the creation of this law. I think that it is an extremely interesting problem: do you accept to act within the structure of an oppressive order in order to change it but risk to ratifying it, or do you fundamentally refuse to compromise at any level with this structure?

I think that architects are confronted with the exact same question continuously. Do you accept to design a prison thinking that you might be able to improve a little bit the prisoners' life conditions or do you plainly refuse it? Furthermore, in the latter situation, does that mean that you would then accept to design, an office building, a retail, a school, or any building that would require the eviction of people from the site? I don't pretend in any way to have an answer to this question, but I think that we have to be aware of it.

AHMAD BARCLAY: I feel that it is important to contrast your theoretical design proposal with the many acts of 'illegal' construction continually taking place in defiance of Israeli restrictions, not only in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, but also within Israel itself. A recent action saw residents of Bil'in begin to construct a series of communal buildings on 'Area C' land, reclaimed following the long delayed re-routing of the separation barrier around the village. Alongside such concrete acts of defiance, the apparent deference in your project to the invisible and legally defunct

Oslo-era lines between Areas A, B and C seems somehow timid. As you explain, it was not your intention to present a utopian vision, and while it would be problematic to overstep your position as an outside observer, did you consider more extreme interventions in the course of your design process, or did you consciously reject such approaches?



LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: The very principle of colonization, or of apartheid consists, I believe, in the invasion of daily life and its reorganization on the administrative level. In that matter, I am convinced that very localized actions based on this modified daily life — like Raja Shehadeh’s walks in Ramallah’s hills for example — can be considered as more subversive than other actions in a traditional radical repertoire. The project I designed introduces an intervention in the daily life of people who decide to accomplish their work on a land which has been administratively confiscated from them. Their production — I am talking more specifically of the farmers — is also liberated from colonial control in a similar way to the Indian independent production of salt in 1930, liberated from the British tax. If I may comment on your question, I did not write that I did not want to present a “utopian vision”; what I wrote

is that architecture, in my opinion, can only intervene in the resistive struggle rather than what we now commonly called “a solution.”



AHMAD BARCLAY: There were elements of your final conclusion that appeared slightly ambiguous. You speak of the obvious need for political change in tandem with spatial transformation. However, I didn't follow your characterisation of 'resistance' as an act of the present, and your stated desire to 'disregard' past and future in your project: "The architecture developed in this book thus ignores everything from the past just as much as the future. It ... disregards the debate of a "one state solution" which qualifies the current Israeli policies as an apartheid, as well as a "two state solution," which qualifies them as a form of colonization. Resistance is always conjugated in the present and so is this project."

I couldn't help but think that this misconstrues the nature of 'resistance' and 'steadfastness' (sumud) in Palestine, which is almost entirely predicated on challenging a historic and ongoing process of displacement and dispossession, and where acts of defiance (or 'disobedience') tend to be in-



formed very much by both past experience and future possibility. For example, we could look at the simple act of 'staying put,' which endures in many cases in spite of sustained economic and legal pressures, as well as threats to security. Such acts can be understood only in the context of a repeated experience of Israeli-enforced displacement since 1948, and can only be justified by a belief that in time the present political situation can – and will – make way for restorative justice. Could you perhaps clarify this idea of taking the present as a subject of study in isolation?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: I realize that I should define what I call *resistance* here, as I understand your legitimate confusion. *Resistance*, as I use it, consists in one's embrace for the antagonism that splits apart a given order and one's personal or collective ethics. Resistance then implies the creation of or participation in actions that take part within this same antagonism as the necessary expression of one's political manifesto. The metaphor I have in my mind every time I think about it is the image of two hands somehow managing to pull apart an elasticized material, thus creating a hole within it for a certain time before letting it close in on itself again. For a brief instant, a territory of emancipation would have existed and liberated the bodies present on it. Once this instant is over for an internal reason (conflict, reproduction of systems of domination, competition, etc.), or an external one (suppression), we need to work on the next one.

What I meant by stating that resistance only conjugates in the present consists in the fact that it registers in time as an action that is self-sufficient and that can be fully understood only as long as it is being effectuated.

AHMAD BARCLAY: At least to some extent, your book seems to be written for two parallel audiences; an academic architec-

tural one, and an activist one. What would you hope that each of these audiences will take from your work?

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: It is difficult to answer this question as I don't feel that I wrote this book for a particular audience; but you are right, it is something that is always there in filigree. I guess that, just like for the blog I edit, I start from a traditional academic architectural audience as you pointed out, and then try to reach a broader audience of people who are interested in questioning the act of creation in general and to think of its political implication more specifically. I would like architects to understand that no line they trace can possibly be innocent, which explains the subtitle of the book: *The Impossibility of Innocence*.

As for a broader audience that you define as being activist, I think that I have to be very humble here since I don't think that my documentation work in Palestine constitutes something new in any way. However, I did compile a small inventory of architectural colonial apparatuses in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, mostly with my own photographs, in order to illustrate how ubiquitous is the Israeli control over daily life in the occupied territories. I don't think that the word activist comes alone. Depending on your job, your skills, your passion, your social background, etc. you always try to "activate" something in a given field or issue. That is the thing that I have been experiencing here in New York with Occupy Wall Street, for which we all involved our small sphere of knowledge and political involvement in order to constitute a common struggle. In my case, I resolutely try to act with architecture in a realm which goes much beyond architecture. That is what I tried to do with these texts and this architectural project. The effect/affect that I hope from there, is as much the observation that one cannot escape from the politics, as the realization that embracing this political act empowers you in the public debate.

More specifically regarding the Palestinian struggle, unfortunately, too many things about the enforcement of international law on Israel depend on a strict problem of information. In that matter, I think that we are many who cannot stand any longer the continuous disinformation, observed on a daily basis in the European and American press. In face of these news behemoths, we need to constitute a multitude of alternative channels of information that try to be as independent as possible from the economic forces which orient the content. I hope that this is a little bit what we managed to do through this conversation.

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# ABOUT

**THE FUNAMBULIST:** a blog written and edited by Léopold Lambert. It finds its name in the consideration for architecture's representative medium, the line, and its philosophical and political power when it materializes and subjectivizes bodies. If the white page represents a given milieu — a desert, for example — and one (an architect, for example) comes to trace a line on it, (s)he will virtually split this same milieu into two distinct impermeable parts through its embodiment, the wall. The Funambulist, also known as a tightrope walker, is the character who, somehow, subverts this power by walking on the line.

**CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATIVE MEDIA,** Parsons The New School for Design: a transdisciplinary media research initiative bridging design and the social sciences, and dedicated to the exploration of the transformative potential of emerging technologies upon the foundational practices of everyday life across a range of settings.

**PUNCTUM BOOKS:** spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion is an open-access and print-on-demand independent publisher dedicated to radically creative modes of intellectual inquiry and writing across a whimsical para-humanities assemblage. punctum books seeks to curate the open spaces of writing or writing-as-opening, the crucial tiny portals on whose capacious thresholds all writing properly and improperly takes place. Pricking, puncturing, perforating = publishing in the mode of an unconditional hospitality and friendship, making space for what Eve Sedgwick called “queer little gods” – the “ontologically intermediate and teratological figures” of y/our thought. We seek to pierce and disturb the wednesdayish, business-as-usual protocols of both the generic university studium and its individual cells or holding tanks. We also take in strays.



## THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS VOLUME 6: PALESTINE

*... a deep examination of the systematic aspects of Israel's colonial strategy constitutes a necessary production of knowledge that can inform the various means of their deactivation. The cartography (literal and figurative) that results from such an examination expresses the politics of space that are at work in this region. These politics are embodied through architecture and its oppressive characteristics deployed in a deliberate manner.*

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