

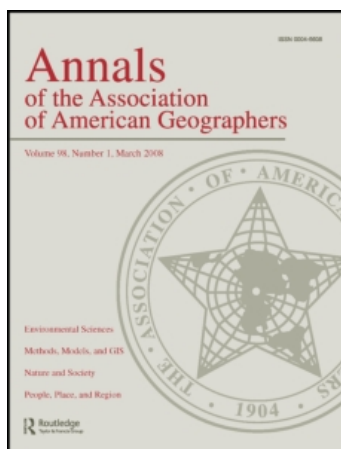
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Walls as Technologies of Government: The Double Construction of Geographies of Peace and Conflict in Israeli Politics, 2002-Present

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Walls as Technologies of Government: The Double Construction of Geographies of Peace and Conflict in Israeli Politics, 2002–Present

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Since 2002, consecutive Israeli governing coalitions have been building a separation wall in the West Bank for the declared purposes of security and separation from the Palestinian population. Building on earlier phases of control, which relied on military orders, cantonment, roadblocks, and checkpoints, the wall functions as a regime of government that colonizes Palestinian life by regulating every nexus of body and space and population and territory. Rather than establishing peace, the wall's regime of government uses separation as a double construction of peace and conflict that isolates peace on the Israeli side and conflict on the Palestinian side.

Key Words: biopower, bio-territorial power, governmentality, Israel Palestine, peace and conflict.

自 2002 年以来, 历届以色列执政联盟出于其所宣称的安全和与巴勒斯坦人民隔离的目的, 在西岸地区建立了一道隔离墙。隔离墙立足于实施早期阶段的控制, 依靠诸如军事命令, 兵营驻地, 路障和检查站, 隔离墙作为政府制度的一部分, 对巴勒斯坦地区进行着殖民统治, 控制着与此相关的每一个人与空间, 人口与领土。隔离墙并非建立和平, 隔离墙作为政府制度, 利用隔离来建立双重的和平和冲突, 将以色列一方的和平与巴勒斯坦一方的冲突相隔离。

关键词: 生物能源, 生物领土的权力, 治理性, 以色列巴勒斯坦, 和平和冲突。

Desde el 2002, las consecutivas coaliciones de gobierno de Israel han estado levantando un muro de exclusión en el Banco Occidental, con los propósitos declarados de seguridad y separación de la población palestina. Construido a partir de elementos preexistentes de control, como los relacionados con puestos militares, acantonamientos, bloques de contención de carretera y retenes, el muro funciona como un instrumento gubernamental que coloniza la vida palestina al regular todo nexo entre cuerpo y espacio, y población y territorio. En vez de traer paz, el régimen restrictivo del muro utiliza la separación como una línea de doble cara para paz y conflicto, la cual aísla a la paz en el lado israelí y al conflicto en el palestino. *Palabras clave:* bio-poder, poder bio-territorial, gobernabilidad, Israel, Palestina, paz y conflicto.

Consecutive Israeli governments have been building a separation wall (Figure 1) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) of the West Bank since 2002. The wall extends for 723 km (450 mi) north to south and at points zigzags deep into the West Bank for more than 16 km (10 mi) to include large constellations of illegal Israeli settlements,¹ directly affecting more than a half-million Palestinians: Some, like Qlaqilia (Figure 1), are surrounded on three sides with a narrow, gated opening on the fourth; many, like Jayyus, are isolated from their agricultural lands; and some are kept on the “Israeli” side of the wall and isolated from the rest of the West Bank (Table 1).² The wall appropriates 11 percent of the land area of the West Bank for its immediate use. That percentage increases to a whopping 40 percent when settlements and bypass roads are included in the calculation. It is yet unclear whether the Israeli governing coalitions will build

the eastern side of the wall (now about 8 percent complete), thus surrounding the West Bank from all sides and annexing the Jordan Valley. If that were to happen, the wall would expropriate an additional 25 percent of the West Bank land area, leaving the Palestinians about 13 percent of historic Palestine.

Numerous accounts have explored the wall's humanitarian, sociospatial, territorial, and political effects. Some studies focused attention on the daily effects of the wall on Palestinian lives—from the dismantling of the educational systems of many West Bank communities (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2004) to the disruption of access to health care services (Directorate of Education-Qalqilia 2003); from denying access to farmlands (Jayyus Municipality 2003) to general effects on Palestinian livelihoods (Dolphin 2006). Others have focused on the political effects of the wall: how it shifts the presumed borders

West Bank Wall - Map 2006

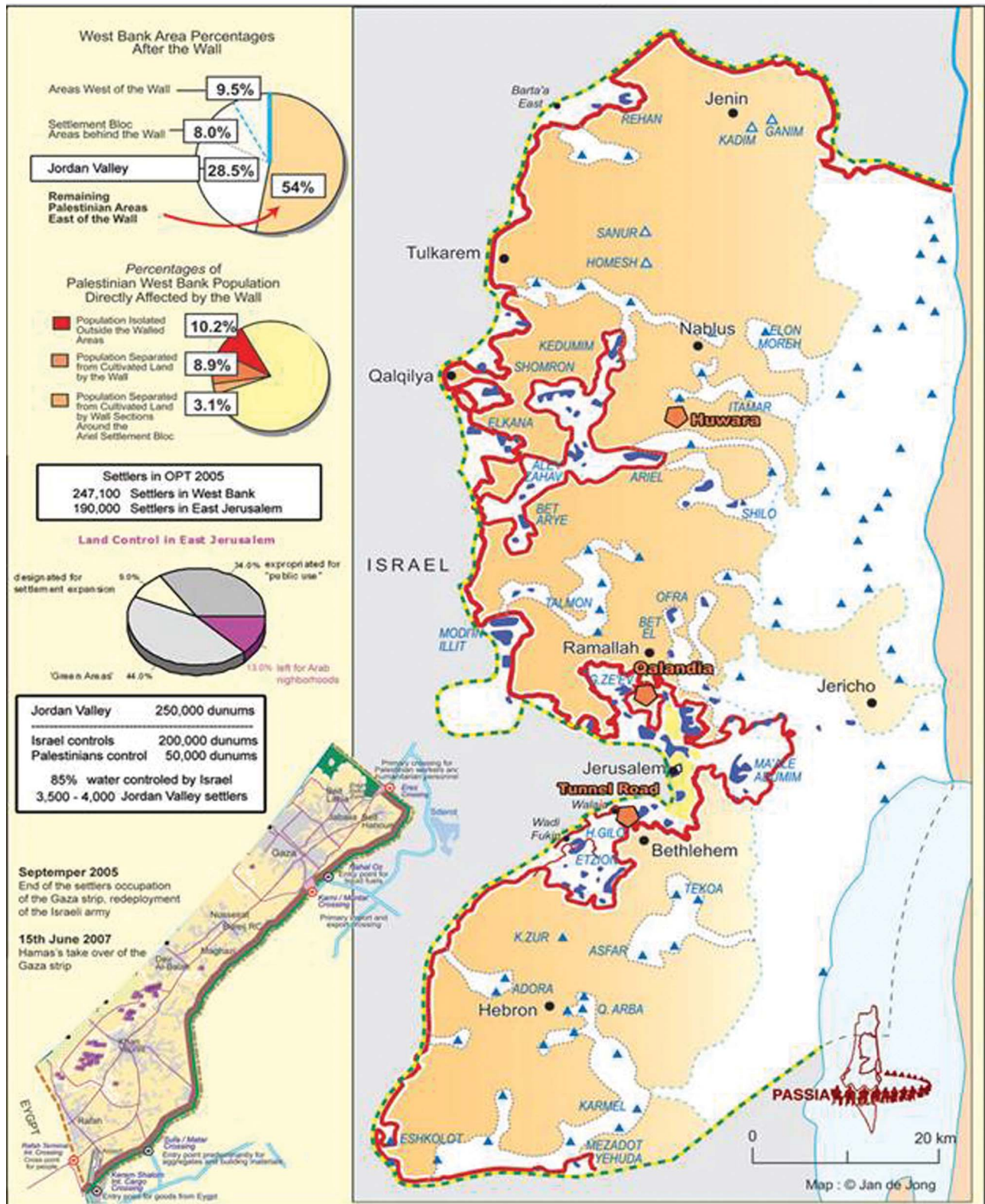


Figure 1. The Israeli Wall in the West Bank. Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, Jerusalem, <http://www.passia.org/index.htm> (last accessed 20 September 2008).

Table 1. Palestinian population affected by the barrier’s route

	Number of communities	Number of residents
Communities west of the barrier ^a	17	27,520
Communities east of the barrier that are completely or partially surrounded ^b	54	247,800
East Jerusalem	21	222,500
Total	92	497,820

^aResidents of these towns and villages will require permits to live in their homes, and they will be able to leave their communities only via a gate in the barrier. The figure does not include three communities that are presently situated west of the barrier but lie east of the barrier according to the currently approved route.

^bResidents of these towns and villages will not require permits or have to pass through a gate.

Source: B’Tselem’s Web site (http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation_Barrier/Statistics.asp, last accessed 20 September 2008).

between Israel and Palestine from the 1967 green line deeper into Palestinian territories, creating new facts on the ground (Khalidi 2005); how the wall invests the two-state solution with new meanings and sheds doubt on both the viability of that solution and the type of a Palestinian state that might emerge under the wall regime (Usher 2005, 2006; Khalidi 2006); and how the wall underwrites both multiple forms of resistance on the national, binational, or international scales and multiple organizational strategies of grassroots disruptions of building sites, diplomatic negotiations and complaints, or legal challenges (Lynk 2005).

Most accounts treat the wall as a technology of occupation, separation, or security. As a technology of occupation, the wall is seen as temporary and subject to the strategic calculations of warring parties. Despite its heated rhetoric, probably the most important proponent of this argument is the Palestinian National Authority,³ which rejects the wall as a fundamentally flawed framework for resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict but one that is not necessarily or inherently threatening. As a technology of separation, the wall is expected to undermine the very premise of a two-state solution and promote the ultimate conversion of Palestinians into isolated pockets of population centers with no political, civil, or human rights to speak of. In Khalidi’s (2006, 182) words, Palestinians become “stateless in Palestine.” Finally, as a technology of security, the wall is meant to separate Israeli citizens, including settlers, from the Palestinians, which implies an expanded notion of security that deems settlers and settlements within the West Bank part of the territory of the Israeli

state (Lynk 2005; Sorkin 2005). The Israeli governing coalitions are the logical proponents of such an argument, but so are a number of nongovernmental organizations (Yacobi 2006, 752).

In all three frameworks for understanding the wall lurks an assumption that it can only serve one of these purposes (occupation, separation, or security)—all of which are presumed unique to the Palestinian–Israeli condition. Such singularity fails to recognize the general function of the wall as a double technology of government for spatially regulating bodies and populations, not of the Palestinians only but also of Israelis, settlers and otherwise. Thinking of the wall as a multipurpose technology of government that spatially invests individuals and populations in relations of power helps us understand its simultaneous dual construction of geographies of conflict and peace—understood here narrowly as violence and lack of violence.

In the following section I discuss the Israeli occupation, not as an undifferentiated strategy from 1967 until the present but as three successive regimes of government that differently organize individuals and populations in space (occupation, 1967–1994; cantonization, 1994–2002; and separation, 2002–present). In the section that follows, I provide four brief ethnographic accounts from fieldwork conducted in 2004 and 2006 to shed light on how the wall becomes a technology of government in practice. I then conclude by synthesizing the arguments of the article and by posing questions about the possible governmental effects of the wall on the Israeli population.

Israeli Control and Regimes of Government: From Occupation to Cantonization to Separation

Most state and international relations theorists focus on territory as the defining element of modern government and place emphasis on sovereign (territorial) power as a result. Discussing his notion of governmentality, Foucault (1977, [1978] 1990, 2007) shifted attention from territory to population as the most important element in relations of power and government, or what he called *biopower*. Recent critiques of Foucault (Alatout 2006; Crampton and Elden 2007; Elden 2007) rethink population and territory in relational terms, viewing government as a bio-territorial process by which categories of territory and population are continually *constructed* and *articulated* with one another (Alatout 2006).

With this theoretical intervention in mind, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967 can be divided into three distinct periods, each with its own regime of government: occupation, 1967 to 1994; cantonization, 1994 to 2002; and separation, 2002 to present. Each period had a dominant technology of government that constructed various categories of people and land and related them to one another, and each regime of government that came at a later stage benefited from and assumed relations of power and government that preceded it. Against those techniques of government, the West Bank was turned into a fractured, disjointed space and the Palestinians into a Sisyphean people whose aspirations for nationhood are continually challenged and violently shattered.

Between 1967 and 1994 occupation and control over territory and population were managed through military orders (MOs) issued and enforced by the Israeli military commander in the occupied Palestinian territories to confine the Palestinian population to as little land as possible and to limit their access to resources (Benvenisti 1984). These regulations (see MOs 58, 59, 321, 364, 569, and 1091) resulted in the transfer of large tracts of land (more than 30 percent of the West Bank) to Israeli military control and to Israeli settlers who moved to the West Bank under military protection (Shehadeh 1988). The legal and practical processes of exerting control over territories and bodies sowed the seeds of a system of separation, anticipating the future wall regime: (1) increasingly, settlement expansion seemed to be a permanent activity; (2) occupation, as a regime of government, increasingly seemed the wrong description of what was taking place (it seemed more permanent than it was initially thought to be); (3) the security of the state of Israel expanded to include the security of settlements and their environment; and (4) as a result, Palestinians were prohibited from using most of the land mass of the West Bank (e.g., Palestinians were prohibited from using the bypass roads, which connected large settlements directly to Israel proper and were reserved for Israeli settlers and the military; Davis, Maks, and Richardson 1980; Benvenisti 1984; Davis 1987).

Between 1994 and 2002, a new regime of cantonization emerged with roadblocks, checkpoints, and bypass roads as its constituent elements. The Oslo agreement of 1994 divided the occupied territories into three categories of land (Figure 2) subject to different regimes of movement, surveillance, and management: Area A, heavily populated by Palestinians presumably under full Palestinian control (civil and security); Area B, under

Palestinian civil control but shared security arrangements; and Area C, all territories not included in the first two (Israeli settlements, roads, and highways, even those connecting Palestinian towns and villages, uninhabited spaces, state land, etc.). Not only was the area under Palestinian control extremely small, but Israeli policies followed during this period disrupted the contiguous geography of Palestine. Military checkpoints and the massive network of bypass roads disrupted the north–south route (Nablus–Ramallah–Jerusalem–Bethlehem–Hebron) that was the main artery of West Bank life before and during the early years of occupation. At the same time, and to complete regional consolidation, east–west roads like that between Nablus, Tulkarm, and Jenin became more important for the regional economy of the north. The same can be said about the Hebron and Bethlehem areas. By

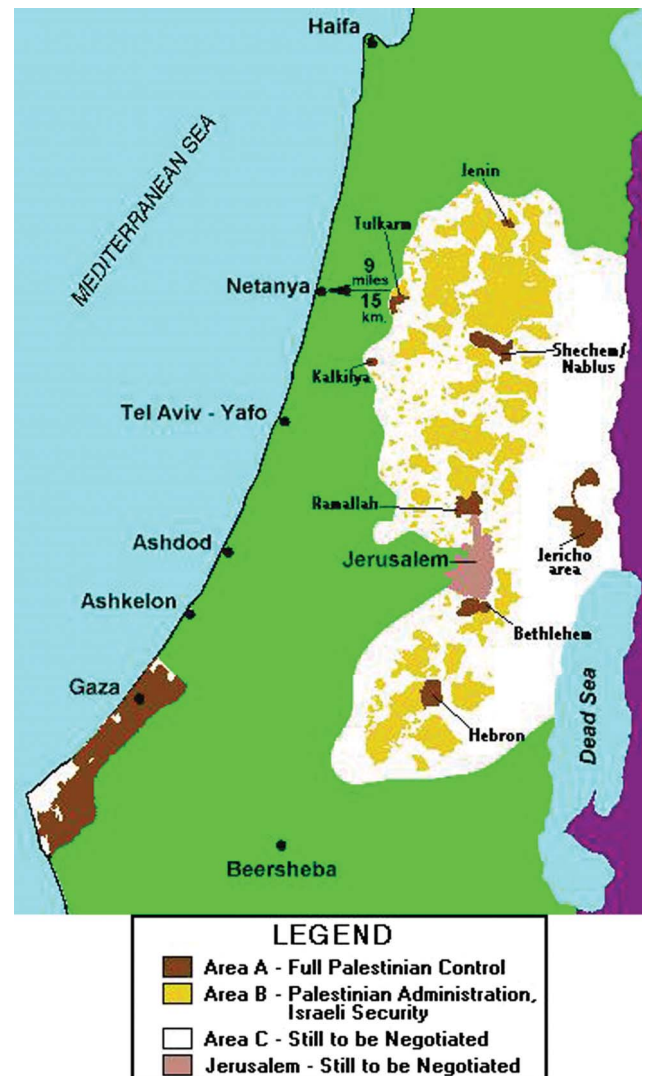


Figure 2. Land distribution according to Oslo II.

manipulating the ease or difficulty of movement throughout the West Bank, Israeli military forces were constructing different political and economic geographies that divided the West Bank into northern, central, and southern regions.⁴

Responding to the strong Palestinian resistance and to turn cantonization—what Kimmerling (2003) called *politicide* in a different context—into a permanent feature of Palestinian political life, unilateral separation has become a dominant concept in Israeli political discourse since the mid-1990s. Calls for a separation wall, initially the brainchild of Ehud Barak, Uzi Dayan, and other Labor generals, intensified during Ariel Sharon's rule in the early 2000s and the rest became history.

The assumption that it is possible to separate unilaterally from the Palestinians, while keeping intact all the miseries of occupation and cantonization, is naïve. The second *intifada* and the suicide attacks carried out in Israeli cities have proved that point. Had the sepa-

ration wall been built along the green line, one would probably have had to concede that what it sought was indeed separation, but the wall does not separate Israelis from Palestinians. If at all, it dramatizes their proximity; it zigzags through Palestinian villages and towns, engulfs ever more lands, and incorporates the major settlements in the West Bank within the wall. If at all, it brings Israel closer to the occupied Palestinians, not farther from them.

If some Palestinians were at all able to escape governmental regulations under regimes of occupation and cantonization, the omnipresent wall and all the regulations surrounding its maintenance as a functioning technology of government colonize every possible nexus of body and space. Not leaving anything to chance, the wall carves space according to a calculated policy of annexation and dispossession. Whatever the wall does not achieve in its spatial-material form, it does through the unwieldy regulatory practices of permits, registrations, rules, norms, and codes.



Figure 3. Seasonal gate at the boundaries of Jayyus. © Samer Alatout 2004.



Figure 4. Daily passage gate. © Samer Alatout 2004.

Regulating Traffic: People, Lands, Agriculture, and Community Life

Lack of freedom of movement and its effect on politics, economy, education, and social life have been a

Table 2. Gates throughout the wall, by area, July 2008

Area	Open gates	Seasonal gates	Closed gates	Total
Qalqiliya	11	3	0	14
Salfit	0	3	3	6
Tulkarm	6	4	0	10
Jenin	2	9	0	11
Jerusalem	0	0	10	10
Ramallah	1	0	7	8
Hebron	0	0	7	7
Total	20	19	27	66

Note: Data from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
Source: B'Tselem's Web site (http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation_Barrier/Statistics.asp, last accessed 20 September 2008).

constant point of tension in the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967. Since then, each regime of government constructed a regime of travel that was based, among other things, on individual biographies (how old, how involved in politics, what types of activities are practiced), communal differentiations (how collaborative is a community with occupation forces; what interests do Israeli settlers have in that community's resources; what type of a community is it, rural or urban; what type of work do most people do in that community; and how reliant is that community on work in Israel), spatial proximity to settlements and Israeli cities and towns, and the Israeli economy and its needs. Travel regimes rely on the heavy use of various documents: identity cards marked with political notations about the individual; travel permits that define where and when an individual is permitted to travel—is he or she allowed across the green line, is he or she allowed to stay in Israeli towns overnight, which ones, what times are those travels allowed and for how long;

permits to travel across one of the bridges to Jordan, which bridge, when, and for how long. Even permits to travel to Jordan, for example, also indicate notations on the conditions under which this traveler should be allowed to cross the bridge and if that permit should be canceled if those conditions are not met.

The wall has sixty-six gates (Table 2) that regulate traffic on both sides. Twenty-seven are closed and used for military purposes only. Nineteen are located in places where the wall separates farmers from their lands; however, these gates are open only seasonally (Figure 3) in time for olive picking and harvest. Twenty of the gates are open daily (Figure 4) to allow, for example, farmers to tend to their crops and students to attend schools. For the most part, these gates are open for brief periods two or three times a day, usually for less than an hour in the morning, afternoon, and early evening. To cross back and forth, Palestinians have to have permits that specify the days they are allowed to cross the gate, the purposes for which they are given the permit, the

duration of the permit, and the specific places they are allowed to visit.

In addition to the more prevalent situations in which the wall separates communities on the Palestinian side from their agricultural lands on the other side of the wall, a few communities were walled out (or in, as the case may be), virtually annexed to the Israeli side of the wall and thus separated from neighboring Palestinian communities with which they often constitute a social unit (sharing markets, schools, clinics, and families). Even though the wall circled them in, these communities have to acquire permits to reside where they already resided before the wall or for the purpose of crossing the gates. In any case, granting Palestinians permits to travel, across the wall in particular, depends on individual and community biographies. In the city of Jayyus, for example, a number of farmers have not been given permits to attend their olive trees and agricultural lands. In addition, only family members usually are given permission to work in the



Figure 5. Samiha walking six kilometers to cross the road. © Samer Alatout 2004.

land during harvest or olive picking—hired labor is not allowed.

The Wall and the Production of Illegal Subjects

The wall is a spatial strategy for determining who has a right to free spatial movement. Its construction disrupts the ongoing history of communities throughout the West Bank and, coupled with new legal definitions of people within and outside the wall, marks certain bodies with illegality. Figure 5 shows a portion of the wall that separates East Jerusalem from neighboring Abu-Dees. The woman shown in the picture, Samiha, lives at the northeast corner of this intersection (now in Abu-Dees) and her mother lives at the northwest corner of the intersection (now within Jerusalem). As the wall was built, she was declared a Palestinian, non-resident of Jerusalem, as her mother was being declared a legal resident of Jerusalem. The challenges posed by the wall for Samiha cannot be measured only in terms

of the difficulties she undergoes daily to visit her older mother (walking six kilometers twice each day instead of a few steps across the road). Difficult as that might be, Samiha's daily experience is about government in the broadest sense, about drawing a line between legal and illegal distribution of people in territories. One of the most challenging aspects of the wall is that it marks her travel (walking, dusting, any signs of traveling from across the road) as an illegal act punishable by law. The wall defines her trip as illegal, despite the fact that her daily trip is made possible only through an opening of the wall that is yet to be completed. Neither is her trip kept secret from the state. As a matter of fact, soldiers often see her make the journey and, depending on the priorities of the day, they either let her continue with her journey or not. That is precisely what government does: Illegality is a marker allowing the state to intervene and remove certain bodies from certain spaces, but more important, it also turns mundane daily practices into political frameworks of resistance.



Figure 6. Who is the guardian of the state? © Samer Alatout 2004.



Figure 7. Selling vegetables. © Samer Alatout 2004.

The Wall as an Economy of Power: Who Protects the State?

In Figure 6, the gate is part of the wall and separates Jerusalem from Al Azariyeh, a town on the northeast border of Jerusalem. It demonstrates how the wall's status as a technology of government depends to a large degree on its ability to enroll Palestinians in performing some of its functions. This portion of the wall was delayed because of an order issued by the High Court of Israel. A Palestinian resident on the "other" side of the wall (Najeeba) objected because the wall would cause her undue harm by making her travel to work and back unnecessarily cumbersome. Najeeba is a legal resident of Jerusalem who is married to a Palestinian from Al Azariyeh with a West Bank identity card. The High Court ordered the military to stop building the wall in that portion until the dispute was resolved. Instead, the military built this particular gate to allow Najeeba access to her workplace. The key was entrusted with

Najeeba. She is supposed to use it to open the gate and then lock it behind her to prevent others from crossing the wall. When I first passed by the gate (I didn't have my camera then), she had already passed through and was locking in her husband and eight-year-old son. Assignment of identity is arbitrary for sure; however, the fact that Najeeba is entrusted with the security of the state is a clear example not only of enrolling Palestinians in performing the functions of the wall; it demonstrates how the wall itself functions in an economy of power.

New Emerging Informal Economies of the Oppressed

Figures 7 and 8 show women and men crossing the wall for daily travels to set up vending locations on the streets of Jerusalem, visit family members, visit health facilities, and so on; however, these pictures draw into question the whole security argument with which the



Figure 8. New economies of separation. © Samer Alatout 2004.

Israeli state justifies building the wall. This area is not a passage point of a few desperate souls. It witnesses thousands of travels in both directions each day. It is not, in other words, a small pocket of illegality. Again in Al Azariyeh, this portion of the wall is lower than in other places. On its side, there is an edge of about one to two feet wide. People straddle the wall, stand up on the edge, pass from one side to another, and hand babies from one adult to the other. The edge drops at least thirty feet down, so there is a bodily threat to each one who passes through that portion of the wall. I saw and interviewed a number of people in that location. The stories are often similar but never the same—each surprises you in ways you have not expected before. Two women, who seemed in their sixties or seventies, each carrying a large cloth that contained assorted vegetables, were heading toward downtown Jerusalem to sit on some street corner to sell them. I asked them how far do they travel to sell the vegetables they carry on

their heads and if that travel was worth it. For the most part they come from Jericho all the way to Jerusalem, the regional economic, social, and cultural center—they used to do that before the wall. There is no market for their products in Jericho or even other smaller towns like Al Azariyeh. Many other women jumped through the edge from one side to the other. Children of ten or eleven years old had the same stories of walking for an hour or two to reach the point where they can cross the wall to walk around Jerusalem selling cigarettes.

Beyond these many individual stories, there is a whole new economy of bodies, commodities, and travel emerging. The whole economy is illegal, but that is what makes it fascinating from a theory of government viewpoint. The goal of the Israeli state and the wall are not *exclusively* repressive, as it is the redistribution of people and things in spatial arrangements that marks some as illegal and others as legal. The illegal



Figure 9. Signs of resistance. © Samer Alatout 2004.

arrangements are not meant to be busted but to be monitored and surveilled, not by the army and the apparatuses of security only but by internalizing the illegality of one's body in the space in which it is traveling. It is illegal for a Palestinian from the other side of the wall to travel to Jerusalem and that illegality is marked by the difficulty of the travel but also by the presence of the wall and its transgression and by the threat of being caught at all times. Government is about the

normalization of such a distribution of bodies, things, and economies.

Signs of Resistance

On the eastern Palestinian side of Abu-Dees I came across a portion of the wall that was interesting, not only because of the heavy graffiti along its length and height but because of the kaffiyeh hanging on top of

the wall. I didn't have a camera then but returned the very next day with one in hand to take a picture. The kaffiyeh was not hanging on the wall anymore (as if thrown by someone from the ground) but actually affixed to the highest points of the wall (Figure 9). It is not a coincidental story; it is a story of resistance. At one moment it declared that the wall is breachable but also that its breach did not necessarily mean opening a frontal war with the Israelis. It was left there as a reminder of the possibilities and ingenuities of Palestinian resistance and that the wall can, as a matter of fact, be breached at will.

Conclusion

The separation wall in Palestine is a technology of government whose regulatory framework attempts to control all spaces and people in the West Bank. It delivers its political, economic, and socio-spatial effects through the intricate details of its material and regulatory elements: its length, height, route, gates, permits, regulation of travel, biographies of individuals and communities, surveillance, enrollments, and maintenance. These intricate details become part of the daily lives of Palestinian farmers, students, doctors, and patients. They colonize the bio-territorial framework of the population and the body and space nexus of the individual.

Although most of the discussion focused on how the wall affects the bio-territorial expression of Palestinians, the wall's effect on Israelis is ever present in the design, intent, and functioning of the wall. Not only are Israeli settlers affected, but so are Israelis living within the 1967 border. The effects, however, are different from those touching the Palestinians. The wall acts as a technology of discipline and containment on the Palestinian side, but it is meant to act as a technology of freedom (of movement, travel, economy) on the Israeli side. It is important to note, though, that further investigation is warranted of the wall's effects on Israeli daily lives and whether their perceived freedom constitutes the condition of possibility for its disciplinary effects on the Palestinians.

Finally, the different effects produced by the separation wall regime on Palestinians and Israelis should turn our attention to the fact that relations of government are indifferent to abstract questions of peace (lack of violence) and conflict (violence). In other words, there is no moral content to government and its technologies. The main concern is to manage relations of peace and conflict in ways that sustain govern-

mental relations and not necessarily to resolve one in favor of the other. Regardless of whether it would or would not function as it is intended to in the future, the wall as a technology of government is intensifying violence on the Palestinian side while attempting to create peace (or at least absence of violence) on the Israeli side.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Following a number of scholars, including Said (2003) and Khalidi (2005), I decided to use the term *separation wall* to describe the structure the Israeli army has been building in the West Bank since 2002. The separation wall has been variously described as a security fence (too technical and depoliticizing of the wall), separation fence (too innocent because the structure does not only separate but makes invisible), and apartheid wall (needs a fuller understanding and accounting of the differences and similarities between the case of Israel and that of South Africa prior to 1994).
2. Many of the details about the wall, some of which are too cumbersome to recount, come from a variety of sources including personal observation and ethnographic fieldwork but also *Haaretz* newspaper between 2002 and 2008 (<http://www.haaretzdaily.com>), the different publications of the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ; <http://www.arij.org>), publications of the Palestinian Hydrology Group (<http://www.phr.org>), publications of the Palestinian Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PENGON; <http://www.pengon.org>), publications of the Israeli Ministry of Defense (<http://www.securityfence.mod.gov.il/Pages/ENG/default.htm>), and B'tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (<http://www.btselem.org/English/>). Citations will be used when appropriate, but for a more comprehensive understanding, please visit the Web sites listed.
3. When asked about the wall and its effects on negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, one Palestinian foreign ministry official who has been involved in negotiations replied, "Walls come down too. Look at the Berlin Wall" (interview, 22 June 2004). This was not an isolated opinion either.
4. Israeli success in constructing different, sometimes conflicting, political geographies in Gaza and the West Bank through spatial and travel manipulation seems to

influence Israeli strategic framework for dealing with the contiguous West Bank landmass.

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