

## Cartographies of confrontation

### Summary of the first session

#### Participants

Respondent: Alain Joxe, director of studies (EHESS – CIRPES) ;

Moderator: Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes, editor-in-chief of the journal *Transeuropéennes* ;

Shmuel Groag, urbanist and architect, NGO Bimkom (Jerusalem): "Planning as a political tool (based on the plan to extend the 'Maale adumin' settlement and the bypass road between the 'Ofra' and 'Beitell' settlements)" ;

Ihab Abou Gosh, lawyer, The Jerusalem Legal Aid Centre (Ramallah): "The Extension of the 'Maale adumin' settlement: its basis in law and after-the-fact legitimation" (written contribution) ;

Khader Shkirat, director of LAW (Jerusalem): "Dwelling: the political and strategic issues of the house" ;

Dr Eyad El Sarraj, director of the Gaza Mental Health Centre (Gaza) (pending confirmation): "The psychological and psychiatric effects of enclosure (focusing on the example of the Gaza Strip)" ;

Lina Yassin, NGO Ta'ayoush (Jerusalem): "Breaking through roadblocks: a proactive strategy" ;

Oren Yiftachel, geographer, Ben Gurion University (Beer-Sheva): "The Rise (and fall?) of Israeli 'ethnocracy': the consequences of Judaizing Palestine (both in Israel and in the Occupied Territories)" ;

Dr. Jamal Zahalka, director of Ahali (Nazareth): "The absence of an Arab city in Israel and its consequences for Israeli society" ;

Jan de Jong, strategic counsellor with the Palestinian negotiations department (Jerusalem): "Negotiating territories: what is under negotiation?".

#### Introduction

Opening the session, *Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes* recalled the principles which underlie the work of the "Convergences Palestine / Israel" collective. It is made up of individuals – who take intellectual responsibility for the project – as well as of journals of ideas, publishing houses and human rights organisations. Its objective is to provide an arena where the facts of contention and colonisation can be shown in detail. It aims at showing that convergence points do exist between Israelis and Palestinians, though they are not always visible, and intends to create a space for in-depth discussion drawing upon hands-on knowledge of the areas of conflict. It seeks to overcome the debate of opinion which prevails in France, and the polarisation around ethnic and religious logic. In short, it seeks to bring about a return to politics. The moderator stressed the importance of

maintaining a certain distance, and striving for civility in both reflection and dialogue, inasmuch as the collective is less concerned with commentating on the very latest developments as with gaining keener insight through more in-depth information. She also noted that the work of the collective is but one amongst many other initiatives in France and in Europe.

Before giving the floor to the various speakers, Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes expressed the collective's great regret at the absence of three Palestinian participants. Ihab Abu Gosh was unable to leave Ramallah, which had been besieged in the previous days; Dr. Eyad Es-Sarraj, from Gaza, had been unable to obtain authorisation to leave Gaza from the Israeli authorities, the Eretz checkpoint having been closed for two months and the Israeli Embassy in France, having been advised of his case the week prior to the meeting, not having taken any action. It was impossible for Khader Skhirat to leave East Jerusalem, in solidarity with the fifty-five Palestinians working with the LAW organisation, of which he is director, for whom all movement is forbidden.

## **Part One**

### **First sequence: moving, dwelling**

#### ***Shmuel Groag***

Israeli urban planner and architect, activist with the Bimkom organisation, Shmuel Groag began his talk with a broad overview of the reality of the settlements, before turning to a subtle case analysis, making use of geographic maps, of the "Maale adumin" settlement, intended to surround East Jerusalem and to deprive it of any possibility for territorial, economic and urban development or expansion.

The reality of settlement is that of tight control over a territory, by means of two tools: the land belonging to the State of Israel and the colonies. When one speaks of the West Bank or Gaza, it is the image of a Swiss cheese that most readily comes to mind: a splintered and riddled territory, where the populations are closely inter-linked, and where the issue is to separate them through planning and through bypass roads. The basic principle of Israeli planning is to encircle zones of Palestinian population and to inhibit the growth of Palestinian urban centres, thereby maintaining a double system of territorial control, that is both real (effective control of 44% of the West Bank through the rupture of all territorial continuity, limitation of free movement, control of access to vital resources – particularly water) and virtual (definition of very extended municipal boundary lines around those settlements that have actually been urbanised, and which ensure Israeli settlers a very expansive space for living and economic growth). These encirclement strategies, combined with those of territorial discontinuity for the Palestinians (and territorial continuity ensured by the bypass roads for the Israelis) create a Palestinian enclavement policy.

Shmuel Groag shed light on the legal labyrinth that serves as a background to settlement. Often, the settlements are established in the name of military imperatives, and are subsequently transformed into settlements for civilian populations, through a legal sleight-of-hand against which both Palestinian organisations (including The Jerusalem Legal Aid Centre, run by Ihab Abu Gosh) and

Israeli organisations (such as Bimkom, in particular) have jointly and constantly fought. Pointing out once again that the number of settlers in the West Bank and in Gaza had doubled between the time of the signing of the Oslo agreement and today, he concluded his talk by explaining that in the mind of the Israeli public, every empty space is considered to be a space available for Israelis.

### ***Ihab Abu Gosh***

The text for this talk, written with emotion during the first siege of Ramallah in March, was given to Shmuel Groag by one of the people working with the Jerusalem Legal Aid Center, and read by Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes. It focused on the distress of the Palestinians under siege, and stressed the fact that the function of the ongoing Israeli campaign was to legitimate the occupation rather than to bring it to an end.

As Ihab Abu Gosh pointed out, since Camp David close to 1000 civilians have been killed – of which dozens have been children under fifteen – almost 4000 houses destroyed, and thousands of acres of plantations (olive groves, orchards) ripped up, by order of the Israeli government. He noted that 79 checkpoints segment the Occupied Territories into 124 discontinuous parcels.

He emphasised more specifically several geographical and territorial facts about this reality: “almost 200 settlements, with their network of bypass roads, have divided the Occupied Territories into townships of varying population density, with no basis for development, with no control over access to water resources, borders or any other essential component of socio-economic development.” He referred back to the map consecutive with the Oslo agreements, where Zone A, placed entirely under the control of the state of Israel (for questions related to security, planning, urbanisation and building) and representing 60% of the Territories, zone B, where Palestinians have partial responsibility and which constitute 22% of the Territories, and zone C, where the Palestinians have full responsibility, and which represent 18% of the Territories

### **Second sequence: enclosures, encounters**

#### ***Lina Yassin***

Under the title *Ta’ayush: Challenging the Maps*, Lina Yassin presented the organisation she is involved with and the actions they have undertaken in terms of breaching borders. The Arabic term *Ta’ayoush* means “living in partnership,” which implies active coexistence rather than mere cohabitation of two separate entities. The reference here is to a dream, a desire for a Judeo-Arab partnership. Ta’ayoush is the first organisation bringing together Arabs and Jews in Israel to bear an Arabic name. This must be seen as stemming from the will to practice equality, and to put an end to the “host-hosted, occupants-occupied” types of logic so prevalent in Israel itself. The association was created after the events of October 2000, after thirteen Palestinian Israeli citizens were killed during their movement in support of the Palestinian people of Palestine in the course of the Al Aqsa Intifada. The organisation calls for an end to the occupation of Palestine and total civic equality between the Arabs and Jews of Israel.

Ta’ayoush is involved in two types of actions. In the Occupied Territories, the organisation sends in

supply convoys (food, clothing, toys) to villages that have been cut off. The first convoy went to the village of Haris, and several others have followed. In providing help to the populations, the point is to challenge the reality of borders, checkpoints, roadblocks, sieges and enclosure. The organisation also initiated and carried out a visit to Chairman Arafat, blocked in Ramallah.

In Israel, the work of Ta'ayoush – based on ideas of peace and equality – focuses on “unrecognised villages.” These are Palestinian villages in Israel, which, in 1965, were declared “agricultural land,” where nothing can be built, including access roads, electricity infrastructures, water mains, and so on. Constant pressure is exerted on the residents of these villages to abandon their homes. The support of the organisation focused initially on the “unrecognised” village Dar Al Hanoun, in Wadi 'Ara, at the border of the Green Line. The organisation also provides support to Azmi Bishara.

In conclusion, Lina Yassin pointed out the difficult posture of the Israeli Palestinian activists in the Ta'ayoush movement: they are doubly sidelined – both by the Israelis because they are Palestinian, and by the Palestinians because they are Israeli citizens.

## **Part Two**

### **Third sequence: land, territory, identity**

#### ***Oren Yiftachel***

Dealing with the analysis of the “State of Israel as an ethnocracy” and the “Judaicization of Palestine,” Oren Yiftachel’s talk drew upon a sweeping comparative study of the ethnocratic regimes throughout the world, and upon a thorough and precise geographic and cartographic analysis of the state of Israel’s relationship to land and planning.

He first of all pointed out the principles of ethnocratic regimes, where ethnic belonging prevails over citizenship, to which they subordinate the distribution of resources and power. Ethnocratic regimes typically result from the combination of three elements: colonialism, ethno-nationalism and capital’s ethnic logic. They are characterised by a structure and a mode of segregation organised in keeping with ethnic classes. Such regimes can be found in Estonia, Sri Lanka and in Malaysia. The case of Israel illustrates this process of how an ethnocratic regime is fabricated. It developed around the central and mono-ethnic project of Zionism intent upon Judaicizing Israel/Palestine. This strategy was implemented through land, settlement, immigration and military policies, and has created a stratified, segregated political geography. This project has led to a rupture with state borders, due to the growing involvement of world Jewry in governing Israel, consequently shunting equal citizenship, popular sovereignty and democratic principles into second place. More particularly, the Judaicization project has led to dispossessing Palestinian Arabs, but also modified the relationship between Jewish ethnic classes, and in particular between the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi and secular Orthodox Jews. In Israel, discourse and space are constitutive of one another in an endless process of social construction. The careful analysis of the maps thus constituted the starting point for Oren Yiftachel’s contribution, centred on Israel’s political geography.

## ***Jamal Zahalka***

Recounting the baneful fate of the collected works of Virgil during the evacuation of 1948, and, years later, their confiscation from the Khalil Sakakini Centre in Ramallah, now in the possession of the Hebraic University in West Jerusalem, Jamal Zahalka introduced his audience to the cultural issues of occupation and colonisation, drawing links between urban development and a flourishing culture. In 1946, 35% of Palestinians lived in cities. Haifa was a dynamic urban centre, open onto the world and progress (whereas Jerusalem, Naplouse and Hebron were more closed-off and conservative cities). After 1948, any project for Palestinian urban life was literally mowed down. The tragedy of the Palestinian farmers is often mentioned, resulting in an implicit underestimation of the plight undergone by the cities, where the tragedy was total. Palestinians found themselves deprived of their urban elite. Since then, Israeli policy has consisted in curbing the Palestinians' urban development, both in the Occupied Territories and in Israel itself. The same goes for Nazareth as well, for though its status as a large opulent village is problem free, it will not be allowed to develop as a city, with the implications that a phenomenon of that kind would have on national consciousness and development. There is a genuine absence of any Palestinian village in Israel. This absence has serious consequences on the Palestinians' culture: there is no production of novels (the epos of the city dweller), no musical creation, and so on.

Jamal Zahalka concluded by expressing his dismay with regard to the fact that "the Jews of Israel have evacuated their Arab identity." They have turned their backs on the Middle East. They are in an attitude of total refusal.

In the questions that followed Jamal Zahalka's talk, a sociologist pointed out the important role of Palestinians in the development of Beirut. The moderator also drew a link between the strategy of enclosure in the "town mentality" described by the philosopher Radomir Konstantinovic as being a key to ethno-nationalism, and recalled the hatred of the urban (the siege of Sarajevo, destruction of Mostar, and so on), which was shown particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the tenants of ethnic cleansing.

In his answer, Jamal Zahalka pointed out that what took place in Ramallah was not "mutual violence," but a "liberation struggle," where the Palestinians unfortunately had nothing left to lose. He then concluded with these words: "The Palestinians are not against the Jews. They are prepared for historical compromise, but in so doing they do not want to compromise their own history."

## **Fourth sequence: lands, territories, negotiations**

### ***Jan de Jong***

Jan de Jong spoke in his capacity as a geographer (and historian of geography) and as counsellor to the Palestinian Authority on planning. He first focused his talk on what was being negotiated in Camp David and Taba. His line of argument was based on the link between territory and the potential for economic development that it offers, or doesn't offer. A viable state is a state where it makes sense to live, and that has potential for "metropolisation." Without a metropolis for the Palestinian state, there can be no viable state. Given the detailed and very visual nature of his presentation, and for lack of a written contribution for the time being, it is only possible to sketch out the gist of his talk in broad strokes.

At Camp David, the state of Israel proposed to retrocede 90% of the West Bank and Gaza, as well as 90% of Jerusalem. The Palestinian refusal was based on what the remaining ten percent effectively represented. That remaining 10% would have segmented the future Palestinian state into three distinct zones, separated from one another by vast zones of Israeli settlements and bypass roads. The remaining ten percent would make it impossible to create a viable state, both economically and socially. At Taba, 95% of the Territories in the West Bank and Gaza were to be retroceded, but the remaining 5% were still problematic. East Jerusalem remained hemmed in, deprived of any hinterland which would be necessary in the long run if it were to develop into a genuinely prosperous Palestinian metropolis.

There is an overall blockage of urban development. A city such as Ramallah is surrounded by settlements, and has no possibility to expand. In Arab Jerusalem, because people cannot build next to or behind their homes, they have to build on their own livestock-farming and cultivated lands, which thus disappear, in a process that might be described as a “population encapsulation strategy.” Territorial negotiations and real control over economic development are thus intrinsically linked – a fact that no quest for peace can afford to overlook.

## Conclusion

In summing up, *Alain Joxe* first of all reasserted that one of the collective’s objectives – that is, to accumulate descriptive and informational material – had been achieved. He pointed out the contradiction between the current conjuncture, which is tending toward the dissociation of populations – and representations of a bi-national Palestine, based upon reading maps. In a certain way, the settlement process has been at cross-purposes with the project of a Zionist state, inasmuch as it has led to infinite points of contact and extreme intermingling between the populations. Thus, examining the maps suggests that there can be no separation without a military massacre. Military victory has never guaranteed the negotiation of a viable peace and the risk now being run is of all the Palestinians being transformed into “poor suburbanites.” We have reached a violent impasse, with the risk of a generalised expulsion, Israel being hard pressed stick to any stable policy given the unstable status of its regime, along the lines of the “French Fourth Republic.” The active involvement of Europe and the United States still seems remote.

*Paris, 10 April 2002*

*Summary by G. Glasson Deschaumes*

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