



Center for Development Studies



## **When settler colonialism becomes ‘development’: ‘fabric of life’ roads and the spatialities of development in the Palestinian West Bank**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Three years ago the weekly magazine *The Nation* published an investigative piece by Nadia Hijab and Jesse Rosenfeld titled “Palestinian roads: Cementing Statehood, or Israeli annexation?” (2010) The text underscored the political nature of major road development projects in the West Bank. More specifically, the authors raised questions about the role that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) play in supporting the construction of a Palestinian road network that accommodates and facilitates Israel’s colonial policies. These USAID funded roads, the article argued, are part of an Israeli plan presented to and rejected by the donor community and the PA in 2004. In deed, following diplomatic pressures to relax the tight closure imposed on Palestinians after the second Intifada, the Government of Israel (GOI) sought funding from donors to build 500 km of what they branded as ‘fabric of life’ roads. That is, the GOI, in attempt to rebuild the indigenous ‘fabric of life’, proposed a separate Palestinian road network to sustain and consolidate rather than dismantle an entrenched closure regime consisting of physical infrastructure –such as checkpoints, road restrictions, checkpoints and the wall— and draconian mobility regulations –such as the permit system that impinges upon the Palestinian freedom of movement.

This controversy raise to the fore crucial issues that speak to the political geography of infrastructural development and more specifically to the ways ‘development’ materializes in space consolidating racialized landscapes in the West Bank. Rather than focusing exclusively on Israel’s architecture of occupation, the case brings our attention to the often-neglected aspects, intricate development politics and actors involved in the construction of the Palestinian built environment. Indeed when the GOI seeks and obtains support from the USAID and the PA to fund and build the re-ordering of ‘native’ space what does this say about the role of Palestinian development projects and inter-national actors in the production and consolidation of colonial occupation? How are these projects materially and symbolically constructed and legitimized? In which ways development is transformed into a mechanism to deal with the short-term Palestinian needs arising from the imperatives of settler colonialism? And how do fabric of life roads come to signify the spatial corollary of a systematic process of expropriation, destruction, closure, and rearticulation of the traditional Palestinian road network and the larger geography of the West Bank? Looking beyond the surface of roads allows us thus to unravel their political rational on the one hand, and the relations that exist between Palestinian and donor agendas, and their concomitant discourses on economic development and state building, with the colonial imperatives built within the Oslo

architecture on the other. Ultimately, as we shall see in this paper, the question proposed by Hijab and Rosenfeld is not so much whether Palestinian roads cement statehood *or* Israeli annexation but rather how roads can be seen to fit both purposes. This is so even when the irony remains, as Nigel Parsons remind us, “that formal acceptance of statehood has been attained just as [Israeli] ‘facts on the ground’ seem destined to empty it of meaning” (2007:529)

To explore the intricacies and complexities of infrastructural development in the West Bank the paper advances a settler colonial perspective that brings geography related scholarship on infrastructure and the production of space together with critical development studies. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, interviews and development reports, I look at the political geography of ‘fabric of life’ roads against the background of evolving developing strategies following the Oslo accords. Departing from an understanding that infrastructural development is a profoundly material practice as well as a discursive and intellectual project (Apter, 1997), the paper begins laying out a theoretical discussion about what roads can tell us about the spatialities of development. And more specifically about the intricate interrelations that exist between the rolling out of infrastructure and processes of settler colonialism and development. Secondly, the paper recovers the controversy around fabric of life roads and situates it in the larger context of colonial occupation and the infrastructural development policies that define it. This illustrates the generative processes through which geographies of exclusion are created as well as the discursive and structural ways in which indigenous peoples are spatially and racially situated within (and at the same time, separated from) the designs of Zionist settler collectives. Thirdly, the paper looks at the ways fabric of life roads are rationalized as necessary assets to inter-national efforts at economic development and statehood. The paper concludes highlighting how a close look at infrastructure development, understood as a contingent and ongoing symbolic and material process, provides a powerful site to explore spatialities of development and what this tells us about ongoing development efforts in the Palestinian context.

## **SPATIALITIES OF INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER SETTLER COLONIALISM**

The importance of infrastructure networks –such as roads, water or electricity—in processes of development in much of the Global South has been persistently celebrated in academic and policy literature. Whereas the proper sequencing of infrastructure and development remains a contested one, “most planners — following Rostow's (1960) teleological stages of economic growth — presume that infrastructures are a necessary and sufficient precondition for economic ‘take-off’ and, therefore, an appropriate indicator of progress” (Grandia, 2013:233). Indeed, infrastructure has long become ubiquitous in discussions of development, “a synonym for prerequisite, a way to label all those things lacking in the underdeveloped world—that is, everything separating the state of underdevelopment from that of modernity” (Rankin, 2009:70). This linear relation between infrastructure development and economic growth becomes more conspicuous in the literature focusing on so called conflict-afflicted scenarios, which are characterized by a legacy of damaged, neglected and uneven access to physical infrastructure. In these contexts, the success of ‘post-conflict’ stabilization and development aid efforts is predicated on rebuilding the indigenous institutional and infrastructural capacity (Barakat, 2005). As such, following the signing of a peace agreement, as politically shaky as this might be, donors often hurry to plan for infrastructure in an attempt to re-activate the productive sector and improving the wellbeing of the population (Del Castillo, 2008). Infrastructures and the powerful sense of development that they promise are thus seen to harbinger broader expectations of liberal peace building and state formation, and an invaluable tool to provide tangible benefits to the population and commensurate visibility for donors (see Collier 2007, Le More 2005).

Such teleological view of development however not only has a limited power in terms of explaining the role of infrastructure in promoting economic growth, let alone conflict stabilization (Jones and Howart, 2012); it also provides little insights into the ways in which infrastructure tends to consolidate patterns of fragmentation and inequality (Graham and Marvin, 2001; McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008). As such, this scholarship tends to emphasize the technical and economic value of infrastructure projects while overlooking its socio-political and spatial meaning. This is not surprising considering that mainstream development literature, like traditional accounts of urban politics, typically regard these networks as the purview of engineers or technocrats, rendering them apolitical and unworthy of attention in their own right (see Coutard, 1999; Graham and Marvin, 2001). Recent multidisciplinary studies –particularly critical geography— have however began to explore the centrality of infrastructure in development processes by looking at the ways these networks materialize in space often reinforcing existing power relations and “how infrastructures come to matter politically, both discursively and as a set of materials” (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008:364). In doing so this research has shown how in the Global South, and particularly in colonial and nominally post-colonial settings, uneven patterns of infrastructure and access are also the result of specific practices of inter-national development structured by relations of power which are embodied in legacies of colonial infrastructure (McFarlane, 2008; Kooy, 2008). Thus while infrastructure can potentially be instrumental to the broader development and state building enterprise, they can also actively participate in often unexpected ways in the process by which power asymmetries are articulated and enacted.

Bringing these critical insights to bear on traditional development accounts of infrastructure allows recognizing the profoundly political nature of these networks but it also enables a reading of development practice as a process of continuous spatial reorganization whereby infrastructure and territory are coproduced and transformed together. This spatial sensibility to infrastructural development calls attention to landscapes of inequality and racialized difference in ways that abstract aspatial development approaches cannot. For infrastructure networks effectively play a crucial role in the construction of territory as they create connections and disconnections among places and people, thus redefining spatial relations in physical and economic as well as political terms (see Brenner and Elden, 2009; Zanon, 2011). Such a relational approach to infrastructural development, which draws on a rich history of spatial theory in geography, becomes even more salient in settler colonial contexts—such as South Africa, United States, Canada or Israel. In these environments, whereas the expropriation of land and the parallel elimination of natives are the hallmarks of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006), the initial ability to dispossess, and eventually consolidate itself, rests primarily on physical power and the supporting infrastructure of the settler state (Harris, 2004). As such, infrastructures are a crucial material and symbolic means through which the settler community is territorialized while simultaneously indigenous outsiders are deterritorialized. Typically, as settler colonial infrastructures spread, these networks are normalized in their association with tropes of modernity, progress and development. Conjuring a spatial and political sensibility to the ways in which infrastructure territorializes in settler colonial settings allows us thus to explore the spatialities of development –a term emphasizing the production of space as a material and discursive practice<sup>1</sup>.

This attention to grounded development geographies significantly enhances our understanding of how donor aid and national development practices tend to consolidate and reproduce the racialized, fragmented and uneven character of colonial infrastructure in the Palestinian context. Here, and more specifically in the occupied West Bank<sup>2</sup>, the prevalent post-conflict paradigm adopted by development planners during the past two decades –since

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<sup>1</sup> For a useful geographical account about spatialities of development in the case of Zimbabwe see Donald Moore's *Suffering for Territory* (2005)

<sup>2</sup> Whereas the focus of this paper is the occupied West Bank, the racialized nature of Israeli infrastructures networks can be seen in many other instances such as the Gaza Strip or the Unrecognized Villages in Naqab dessert.

the signature of Oslo's interim 'peace' agreements— assumes occupation to be a temporary event rather than a structural condition. This view not only tends to accommodate the existing realities on the ground; it also confuses conflict for settler colonialism. As John Collins puts it, using the term conflict in Palestine without qualification obscures the nature of Israel's ongoing settler colonial project as well as the violent social, political, economic and spatial structures that define and enable it, including infrastructure networks (2010). In effect, the Israeli settler state has transformed infrastructures into assets that create dual-spatial configurations through networks that entirely run along ethnic lines. These networks have been effectively redesigned from its original and purely utilitarian purpose into political and symbolic tools of Israel's ethnonational project (see Azaryahu, 2001; Weizman, 2004; Jabary Salamanca, 2013). As such infrastructures are used to rearticulate space in ways that serve as a source of connection, but also as a means of disconnection, discrimination and control (see Halper, 2000; Weizman, 2007; Jabary Salamanca, 2010). At the same time, Israel's policies of infrastructure disruption through bureaucracies of occupation, as well as destruction by military means, has been described as a way of "de-development" (Roy 1987, 2004) or "forced de-modernization" (Graham, 2002a, 2002b) of the Palestinian society. In spite of this, development planners rather than challenging the racialized character of infrastructure have tended to invest in Palestinian networks that ultimately accommodate colonial occupation either by consolidating uneven access and dependency on Israel—as in the case of electricity and water— or by endorsing segregation—such as roads.

Roads are a case in point for these infrastructures are a defining feature of the colonial and apartheid policies of the state of Israel (Jabary Salamanca, 2013). From the standpoint of the Palestinian population, Israeli roadways effectively represent bypasses between places and thus an impossibility of mobility but they are also one of the most enduring aspects of colonialism as these networks leave behind violent traces of forced removal, dispossession and segregation of the indigenous urban and rural classes. Yet, whereas literature focusing on Palestine recognizes the crucial role that Israeli roads and its accompanying policies of closure and fragmentation play in constraining development efforts, these accounts rarely pay attention to the ways Palestinian 'national' infrastructures projects also contribute to undermining these very efforts. For if Israeli roads in the West Bank enable settler colonization and indigenous dispossession, then the current development of a separate road network, has become its necessary corollary. In the following, I take fabric of life roads as a starting point to explore what these 'development' projects may suggest about the spatialities of infrastructural development two decades after Oslo and in a context of prolonged settler colonialism. While development rhetoric has it that these roads are tools to improve movement, promote economic growth and state building, I will suggest that the materiality of these infrastructures, and the discourses that enabled and justify them, are invested with productive socio-political, economic and spatial relations that consolidate colonial relations. Rather than neutral means to more substantive ends, I suggest that these donor-funded Palestinian roads are inscribed with power geometries that are central to the continuous reformulation of settler colonial space. By making visible the layered assemblage of discourses, materials, practices, and actors that constitute roads we can thus begin to understand how the fabric of life roads are an outcome and a means of settler colonialism, as well as a mirror of the technocratic and depoliticizing effects of forms of Palestinian development that antepose rituals of state building and economic performance to challenging the settler colonial present.

## **REENGINEERING THE NATIVE'S FABRIC OF LIFE**

The Palestinian uprising that erupted in September 2000 in response to Israel's relentless colonial policies, the Al-Aqsa Intifada, triggered a brutal Israeli repression campaign that caused the death and imprisonment of thousands of people, the military occupation of cities, towns and villages across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the destruction of large swaths of Palestinian homes and donor-funded infrastructure. Less spectacular but equally

devastating was Israel's enforcement of a comprehensive closure regime that resulted in an irreversible transformation of the Palestinian geography, the dismemberment of the economy, and the disruption of all social life. Closure progressively materialized in a mixture of physical infrastructure –such as checkpoints, roadblocks, separate road networks or the wall— and draconian mobility restrictions –via a military-bureaucratic pass system—which deprived Palestinians of their right to freedom of movement. Whereas 'hard' infrastructures enabled Israel to colonize Palestinian land through a process of spatial disintegration and fragmentation, the pass system transformed a universal right into a privilege granted to few on a case-by-case basis (Hass, 2004). Needless to say, if during the intifada closure became extraordinary in terms of scope, duration, and severity, this policy was far from new. As Amira Hass has consistently argued, blanket prohibitions on Palestinian mobility began in January 1991, developing throughout the Oslo years from a temporary measure into a permanent and perfected policy in the face of PA and international indifference (2004). This intimate relation between the control of territory and the control of movement of goods and persons, have come to fundamentally define and enable the colonization of Palestine (Brown, 2004).

With the onset of the intifada, restrictions and prohibitions of Palestinian travel along main and secondary West Bank roads became a crucial component of closure. Israel justified this unwritten policy on security grounds under the premise that all Palestinians are a security risk. Yet the logic of this “forbidden roads regime” (B'Tselem, 2004), as it became clear over the years, was driven by an impetus of separation based on ethnic lines that attempted to separate settler and indigenous mobility and living spaces (see Weizman, 2007; Parizot, 2009). As such, while settlers could travel freely across the West Bank on dedicated highways (built on expropriated indigenous lands) and main roads of the Palestinian network, most Palestinians were forced to use long, winding and in some cases unpaved alternate routes. Furthermore, the forbidden roads regime and other mobility restrictions denied most Palestinians critical access to their farmland and water resources, education and health facilities, and to the rest of their fabric of life. In 2004 alone, Palestinians were banned from using 732 kilometres on 41 West Bank roads because they were either completely or partially closed to them, required a special permit or were somewhat restricted (B'Tselem, 2004). About 674 obstacles, including checkpoints, roadblocks, road gates, etc., regulated the movement of people and goods from one locality to another (WB, 2004a). Furthermore, the construction of the segregation wall, which began being built in 2002, consolidated and in some locations exacerbated the impact of closure. In practice, this meant a significant increase in travel costs and a fundamental change in the travel habits of Palestinians that could no longer plan their trips with normality, nor access many urban and rural areas which became completely out of reach. In this way Israel imposed upon Palestinians an im-mobility condition that literally brought “life to a halt” during the high days of the intifada.

The destructive nature of the closure regime was responsible of unleashing an Israeli-made humanitarian crisis of major proportions. According to the World Bank, closure was the main factor causing the Palestinian people to suffer “one of the worst recessions in modern history” which drove nearly half of the population to live below the poverty line (WB, 2004b:1). Indeed, if freedom of movement is a resource as important as land or water in that it enables the means of production of a community (Hass, 2004), then its denial and strict regulation became an intrinsic feature of the process of Palestinian suppression and de-development (Roy, 2004). That is, by preventing Palestinian mobility and access to critical inputs needed to promote internal growth, closure and the denial of freedom of movement largely contributed to the collapse of the Palestinian economy and to limiting its development beyond a certain threshold (Roy, 1987). This unbearable situation prompted considerable pressure from diplomats, donors and human rights groups that condemned and requested the GOI to remove mobility restrictions and restore ‘normality’. These voices, which were joined by the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the illegality of the wall and its associate closure regime (ICJ, 2004), casted a long shadow over the Israeli state.

### **‘Everything flows’ in the ‘fabric of life’**

In January 2004, nearly four years into the Palestinian intifada and mainly in response to increasing international pressures, the Israeli Ministry of Defence set up a taskforce to deal with the subject of the Palestinian ‘fabric of life’ (*Mirkam Haim* in Hebrew). Headed by retired army general Baruch Spiegel, the committee was introduced as a humanitarian initiative that could assure Israel’s security needs in ways that enabled “as much as possible, a dignified and humane Palestinian fabric of life” (Haaretz, 2004). In essence, the program sought to weave a new infrastructural fabric for the Palestinian population: one that could accommodate Israel’s policies of territorial fragmentation, separation, and closure, with an attempt to improving the appalling socio-economic conditions these very policies had created over the previous decades. More specifically, the motivation of the fabric of life initiative was twofold. On the one hand, to micro-manage and avoid the deepening of a humanitarian crisis that would have required the GOI to intervene by providing food and essential services to the Palestinian population (Weizman, 2004). And, on the other, to reconnect Palestinian infrastructures –such as roads, electricity or water networks—that were being disrupted and severed by the construction of the segregation wall and other colonial infrastructure. Indeed, if, as argued by the GOI, lessening the socio-economic impacts created by its colonial policies was the rational driving the fabric of life, creating piecemeal and punctual infrastructural and logistical ‘solutions’ became its core and daily operational business.

Whereas the fabric of life program initially sought to deal with the Israeli army’s dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians at checkpoints and wall gates mushrooming across the territories, it gradually shifted attention to the impossible mobility geographies resulting from the forbidden roads regime. Thus, in addition to ‘civilizing’ checkpoints, designing an alternative Palestinian road network to facilitate the transportation of goods and persons became one of the program’s core priorities. To this effect, the Israeli army drew up a comprehensive road plan intended solely for Palestinian use that aimed to prevent restrictions from paralyzing movement in certain areas while consolidating separation. The plan, given the name ‘Everything flows’, advocated full separation by assigning the main roads of the West Bank for the use of settlers leaving Palestinians with a network of secondary roads passing through villages and city centres. Following criticism<sup>3</sup>, the project was dropped and replaced by the ‘Roads and Tunnel Plan’. In this revised version, separation was accomplished by means of bridges and interchanges with the Israelis traveling on the top at high speed, and Palestinians at the lower levels, on roads referred to as ‘fabric of life’ roads. The plan, which consisted of more than 24 tunnels and 56 roads, allows Palestinian vehicles to travel on only twenty percent of the roads on which Israeli vehicles travel. By providing settlers and Palestinians with two separate networks in the West Bank, segregation became the rational of this new infrastructural arrangement. As argued by the Defence establishment, the plan was “a result of government policy to speed up the practical separation from the Palestinians” (BBC, 2006). Even though this plan was not officially approved, many of its components were implemented, and fabric of life roads are being built ever since.

The fabric of life roads were intimately imbricated with Ariel Sharon’s “disengagement plan”, which under the pretext of withdrawing settlers from the Gaza strip, to legally rid itself of occupier status, consolidated Israel’s colonial grip over the West Bank. As noted in the plan, Israel was to assist in improving the transportation infrastructure in order to facilitate the contiguity of Palestinian transportation in the West Bank.<sup>4</sup> In this way, “transportation contiguity” became a means to replace territorial contiguity by artificially reconnecting Palestinian population centres affected by closure through fabric of life roads and tunnels. Fabric of life roads, “by diverting Palestinian traffic away from areas reserved for exclusive

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<sup>3</sup> The council of Jewish Communities in Judea and Samaria (YESHA Council) complained that the plan would make impossible to build additional roads to serve Israelis since it will be argued that the roads only serve “occupiers” and are thus illegal (see <http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=28151>)

<sup>4</sup> See the guidelines for the Disengagement Plan here: [http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/DisengageSharon\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/DisengageSharon_eng.htm)

settlement control', contributed to institutionalize the closure regime while lending legitimacy to the frenetic expansion of colonies (settlements), the wall, and the relentless Israeli encroachment over Palestinians lands (NAD, 2005). Ultimately, however, these roads were meant to resolve a greater strategic problem inherent in the territorial framework formalized by the Oslo agreements. That is, "how to enable Palestinians to travel between the territorial islands defined by Oslo –Areas A and B, comprising about 40 percent of the West Bank— on roads not used by settlers" (FMEP, 2004). As such, fabric of life roads became the infrastructural corollary to the architecture of occupation. For if Oslo was about legitimizing the colonization of Palestinian's remaining lands to consolidate a settler society, that is the territorialization of a new social and spatial order. Then, transforming the indigenous fabric of life was an attempt to reterritorialize the Palestinian population within the confines of newly imposed boundaries and to articulate its increasingly isolated reserves. In other words, in order to protect and enable the expansion of the settler's material fabric of life, the indigenous fabric of life had to be severed and reassembled.

### **Mobilizing humanitarianism**

By defining what the Palestinian fabric of life ought to be, the GOI was able to reappropriate, reshape, and eventually reconstruct it according to the imperatives of settler colonialism. Yet this appropriation had as well a discursive function in so far as the fabric of life became a 'humanitarian' signifier to conjure Israel's own security needs with Palestinians livelihood issues: an object that can be disrupted and damaged to protect the settlement enterprise, but also developed and managed in ways that mitigate violence in a 'humanitarian' fashion. For the GOI this security-humanitarian equation follows the logic of the 'lesser evil', that is the acceptability of pursuing an undesired course of action in order to prevent a greater injustice. Eyal Weizman argues that this balancing act derives from the legal principle of 'proportionality', which is the clearest manifestation of the lesser evil in International Humanitarian Law (2012). Drawing on the case of the West Bank wall, Weizman shows how 'proportionality' becomes embedded in concrete spatial and architectural forms through a humanitarian and legal register and in turn, the ways this transformed the wall from a major geopolitical issue into a humanitarian one that ultimately legitimizes it. Fabric of life roads, like the 'humanitarian wall', were an attempt to conceal and civilize the violence and spatialities of settler colonialism by displaying Israel's benevolent attitude towards the Palestinians. Indeed, the fabric of life program "turned 'humanitarianism' into a strategic category in Israeli military operations" (Weizman, 2004:149).

The 'humanitarian' rhetoric that defines the current stage of colonial occupation, which intensified in parallel to the large-scale humanitarian intervention that ensued the intifada, becomes an attempt to normalize it (Weizman, 2004). According to Weizman, the 'humanitarian officer' in charge of the fabric of life program, Baruch Spiegel "best embodies Israel's attempts to govern the occupied territories by 'managing' the humanitarian situation as an instrument of state policy" (2012:83). Humanitarianism is thus no longer something that limits or constrains violence but rather, as Kotef argues, "it accompanies violence and makes it possible" (2010:181). The humanitarian veneer that infused the fabric of life program is in many ways what eventually enabled the GOI to engage with and accommodate the criticism of humanitarian and development actors that were pressing for immediate solutions to the socio-economic impacts of closure. As Weizman sustains, "the massive presence of humanitarians in the field of military operations means that the military no longer considers them as bystanders in military operations, but factors them into the militarized environment, just like the occupied population, the houses, the streets and the infrastructure" (2004:152). In this way, the Israeli army, in their efforts to reroute the flows of goods and persons through an alternative road network for Palestinians, ended up cooperating with donors, financial institutions and human rights organizations that in principle opposed its policies. Thus, the fabric of life program and its accompanying infrastructural and logistical solutions not only

created a new geographical and infrastructural reality; it was also an attempt to redefine relations between settlers and humanitarian and development actors.

### **Settler colonialism solicits development**

The roads and tunnel plan was thus a major Israeli planning, budgetary and humanitarian marketing effort that to a large extent managed to contain a barrage of international criticism. After more than a decade of closure policies and four decades of infrastructural neglect and de-development, the plan constituted the first time architects of occupation designed and implemented a comprehensive road network for Palestinians in the West Bank. Yet the GOI was unwilling to deal alone with the financial burden of a project that included 500 km of roads, mostly rehabilitating existing secondary roads, at a cost of 200 million dollars. In September 2004, taking advantage of the humanitarian crisis it created, the GoI approached the donor community via the World Bank (WB) to help finance the plan. The timing is not negligible as this crucial infrastructural development happened within the framework of the disengagement plan from Gaza, and in a context of intense negotiations between the international community and Israel to revive the Palestinian economy (Le More, 2008) In fact, the proposal was reportedly a response by the GoI to the a World Bank report, Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and Settlements, which underlined that Palestinian economic recovery depended on a drastic shift in the internal closure policy. As Anne Le More notes, “donors could not but delight in the Israeli intention to facilitate movement and contiguity within the oPt, something it had repeatedly said was a prerequisite for Palestinian economic recovery” (2005:132). Israel was thus effectively asking the donor community to finance colonialism according its blueprint for replacing territorial contiguity with ‘transportation contiguity’ in the West Bank, thereby rendering hollow any possibility of Palestinian sovereignty.

Before the plan was officially presented to the donor community, the WB requested the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to prepare a cartographic analysis for exploring its potential implications (see figure 1). By overlapping the proposed roads and tunnels to the existing transportation network, colonial settlements and the wall, the study revealed the profound political nature of the plan (OCHA, 2004). Moreover, it showed that Israel had already requested the USAID to fund fabric of life roads (136.4 Km), some of which were already under construction (54.2 Km) with the approval of the PA. OCHA presented the results at a convoluted donor meeting where the Swiss representative, bearer of IHL, stood up during the presentation and angrily complained that this proposal was not only unacceptable but also a violation of international norms<sup>5</sup>. The PA and all donors, including the USAID, ultimately refused to participate and invest in a plan that entailed a *de facto* recognition and support of colonial occupation. As former Palestinian Planning Minister Ghassan al Khatib put it, the plan “perpetuates the settlements and consolidate an apartheid regime” (Hass, 2004). One of the direct outcomes of this meeting was the establishment, via Cabinet resolution, of a special Palestinian Committee – comprising representatives from various ministries, PECNDAR and the Negotiations Support Unit (NSU)—to evaluate future road rehabilitation projects within the West Bank on a case-by-case basis.<sup>6</sup> As Amira Hass noted, this Cabinet resolution was rather exceptional for it refused the logic of fabric of life roads, disrupting a long time history of PA’s denial and inaction particularly against Israeli closure and fragmentation policies (2004).

The reluctance of donors was largely driven by the legal implications of the ICJ advisory opinion on the illegality of the wall and it’s associated regime –including roads, checkpoints and settlements. The ruling set new ‘rules of engagement’ for donors as it warned about efforts to recognize the illegal situation created by the wall or rendering aid towards maintaining the situation created by its construction. With regards to road infrastructure, a

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with former UN-OCHA employee. Jerusalem, August 2012.

<sup>6</sup> The Committee was based on a Cabinet Resolution passed on 4th October 2004

document prepared by the PA in collaboration with the NSU and presented to donors, determined that “the construction or rehabilitation of roads, tunnels, underpasses, or other passageways that accommodate the restriction created by the Barrier and its associated regime [...] are in contradiction to the ICJ Opinion” (Hampsen and Abou, 2005:14) This was the case of fabric of life roads that as the IDF recognized were “an integral part of the security fence [wall] project ... intended, mainly, to replace other roads, to which the access has been disconnected by the fence’s route” (B’Tselem, 2004:117). Ultimately, this meant that donors could be held legally accountable for supporting projects that, like roads, legitimize occupation. In spite of this, donors’ positions were far from consistent. The same report shows that whereas some donors strongly supported wall mitigation projects on humanitarian grounds, others expressed serious concerns on political grounds, and yet some others, like the USAID, refused to comment due to political concerns.

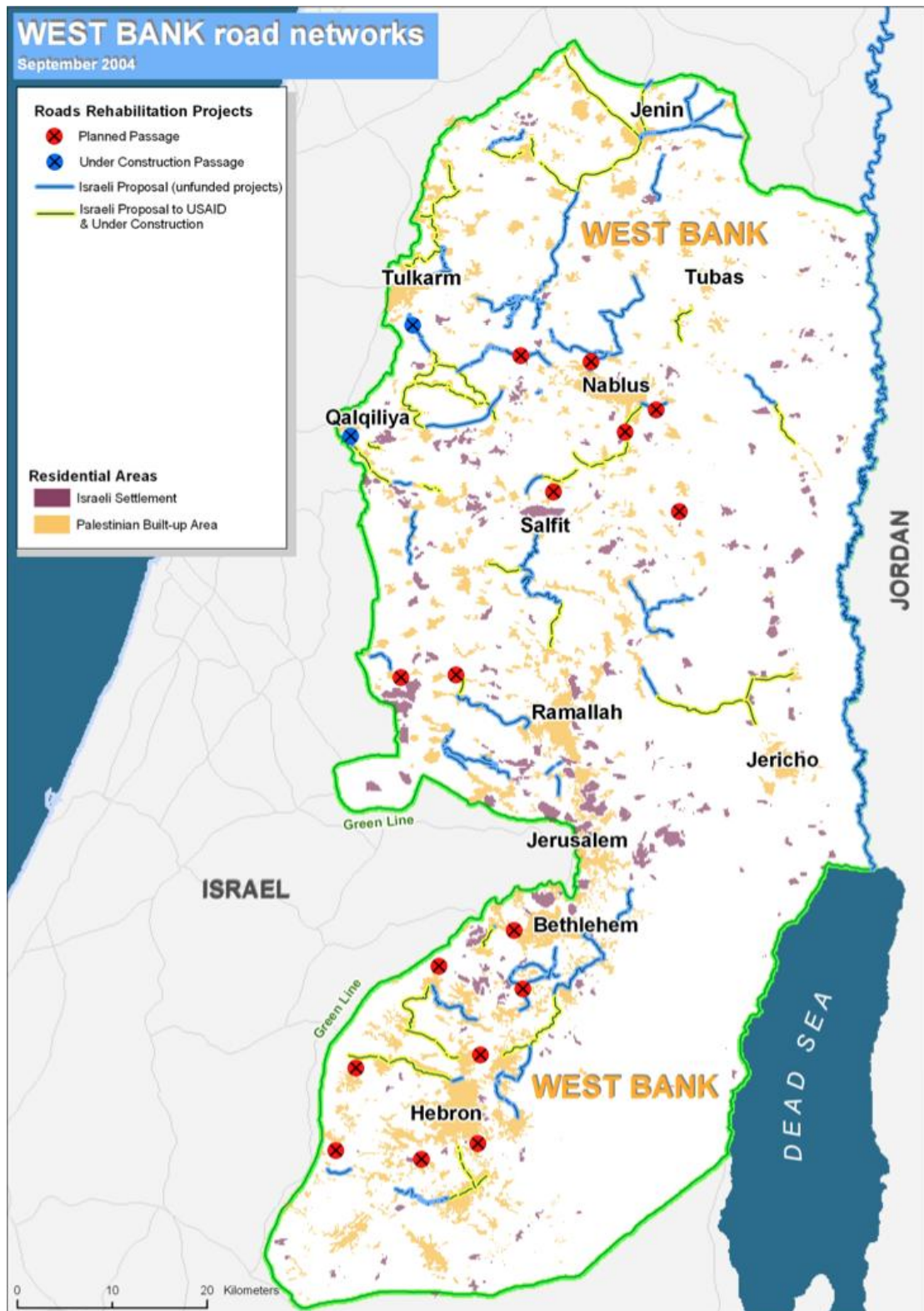


Figure 1. Proposed Israeli Roads Rehabilitation Program and USAID funded roads under-construction. UN-OCHA (2004)

### Constructing the fabric of life

In 2010, six years after the refusal in block to the road and tunnels plan, an investigative report by Nadia Hijab and Jesse Rosenfeld exposed that fabric of life roads were being funded and built by the USAID with the consent of the PA. Based on updated data from ARIJ, the report showed that 32 percent of the PA roads funded and implemented by USAID (between 1999-2010) overlapped with the plan presented to donors in 2004. That is the PA and USAID

effectively executed 22 percent of Israel's plan (about 114 km). In other words, more than 60 Km of fabric of life roads were built since the establishment of the Palestinian committee that had to monitor sensitive infrastructural projects<sup>7</sup>. A month after the report was published, Nazareth-based journalist Jonathan Cook released a more assertive and critical piece titled “US funds 'apartheid' road network in Israel” (2010). Cook essentially rehearsed the above arguments putting however more emphasis on USAID’s influence over Palestinian decision making concerning road planning. More specifically, the text underscored the ways in which the PA was being “bullied into conceding the road infrastructure wanted by Israel”. Suheil Khalilieh, the head of the settlement monitoring at ARIJ, was quoted as saying that “USAID presents a package deal of donations for infrastructure projects in the West Bank and the Palestinians are faced with a choice of take it or leave it. That way the PA is cornered into accepting roads it does not want.” While USAID did not comment, the PA took full responsibility for this embarrassing episode. Indeed, in an unusual and remarkably swift move, Ghassan Khatib, at the time spokesperson for the Palestinian Government Media Centre, responded to the criticism with a public statement. The *communiqué* refused all accusations arguing that there are no new roads being built in the West Bank but instead ‘resurfaced’ or upgraded roads; the PA and not the USAID makes the ultimate decisions regarding roads; and that all planned roads are part of a Palestinian plan which in certain areas intersects with the Israeli map (Khatib, 2010).

Despite the indisputable proof that fabric of life roads were actually built, the PA statement focused on subtleties that did little to counter the reported facts. First, the idea that roads are not new but rather upgraded secondary tracks is precisely the basis to the Israel proposed network, as we have seen above. An employee of the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing put it this way, “resurfacing and upgrading are just euphemisms for endorsing road projects which keep Palestinians away from ever expanding settlement areas”<sup>8</sup>. The problem indeed is not the rehabilitation of roads but rather that these projects eventually entail the permanent closure of crucial sections from the Palestinian network. Second, the argument that the PA decides which roads to develop following evaluation from the inter-ministerial committee set up in 2004 is also inaccurate. In fact, after Hamas won elections in 2006, all committees had to be re-constituted, including the one supervising roads. This means that the committee lay dormant for years only reconvening in 2009<sup>9</sup>. Moreover the PA has yet to develop a comprehensive strategy for roads as to this day it lacks a transportation master plan (MoPAD, 2010) Finally, considering that the USAID is in charged to develop the capacities of the PA in terms of road infrastructure in addition to the fact that it exclusively negotiates all road projects with Israel from the outset and the agency’s record in the region<sup>10</sup>, the claim that USAID does not meddle with Palestinian planning, road or otherwise, lacks credibility. Nonetheless, echoing the position of Suhail Khalilieh, various engineers at the MoPW maintain that in fact “occasionally the USAID does propose road projects which fit Israeli designs”.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, while the USAID had the same position as the PA with regards to the criticism, it was sceptical about the very existence of an Israeli plan. In words of a high-ranking USAID official, “People are concerned about an Israeli [road] plan that does not exist

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the fabric of life roads proposed and built by Israel, the map reflects projects funded by the Palestinian MOPW and the USAID. Some of the later include relevant and problematic road sections such as the Wadi il Naar and Muarajjat roads, as well as thoroughfares in areas affected by closure such as Bethlehem or the South-Easter Ramallah area.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with MoPW Engineer. Ramallah. August, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Ministry of Planning official. Ramallah, August, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> This was not the first time the agency was accused of collaborating in developing Israeli settlement infrastructure throughout the occupied territories. Years before the advent of the so called Oslo peace process Meron Benvenisti, former Major of Jerusalem and leading director of the WB Data Project, released a report about the ways in which Israel limited and diverted US Aid development funding into projects that suited the Israeli colonial enterprise, concretely public works and infrastructures such as roads, water or sewage (WB Data project, XXXX). Moreover, as Roy argues, “the Israeli authorities had long used foreign aid—U.S. aid in particular—to further their political and economic objectives in the West Bank and Gaza in a manner that precluded needed economic reform and insured continued Palestinian dependence” (Roy, Unpublished-Geographies of Aid?).

<sup>11</sup> This is the case of projects like the Wadi-Sair road connecting Hebron to Bethlehem or the Muarajjat road, that creates an alternative to Road 1. These roads, engineers from the MoPWH insisted, are part of the alternative North-South and East-West transportation axis that is being developed and that fit Israel’s strategic infrastructure occupation. Interview MoPW. Ramallah, August, 2012.

[...] Left-folks believe that there is a conspiracy to separate Israeli and Palestinian roads but this is a bunch of bull!”<sup>12</sup> This is surprising considering that, as we have seen, Israel’s plan was well known to the international community. Not least to the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, which years earlier was reportedly briefed by Deputy Defence Minister Efraim Sneh about Israel’s intentions to, literally, build a network of “apartheid roads” (Wikileaks, 2006).

To be clear, it is difficult to contest the significance that alternative roads have for the everyday life of Palestinians, for this infrastructure provides a much needed means of transportation to overcome the obstacles, fragmentation and isolation policies enforced by Israeli colonial occupation. However, as we have seen, the ways in which these roads are being paved reveal a flawed logic: one which ultimately deals with the immediate Palestinian needs arising from escalating Israeli colonial policies rather than addressing its political root causes. Through its assistance in developing fabric of life roads, the USAID and the PA thus not only relieve Israel –as Occupying power—from its obligations under IHL to delivering assistance and services to the Palestinian population; they also, however well intentioned, become complicit in enabling settler colonialism.

## **DISRUPTING RITUALS OF DEVELOPMENT: ROADS TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND STATE BUILDING**

If as we have seen the act of planning, financing and building fabric of life roads is a practice of spatial ordering that reproduces socio-economic and spatial injustices, then no less problematic is how this infrastructure is being rationalized. In what follows we turn our attention to the ways in which fabric of life roads are normalized through and incorporated into the rituals of economic development and state building that followed the intifada; a process that transformed this colonial infrastructure into a neutral description of various prerequisites to economic growth and statehood. In effect, the semantic shift brought about through the politics of international aid from fabric of life roads to the notion of infrastructure (broadly understood), subordinated the construction of an alternative and separate Palestinian network to economic analysis and ideas of the state. In this way infrastructure became a way of talking about the necessities of development without recourse to politics. This not only underlines the technocratic and apolitical veneer associated with such strategies but also the profound flaws that inform development actors’ “unsophisticated but common assumption about the linear progress between peace, security and development” (Le More, 2005:7).

### **Normalizing closure**

In the aftermath of the intifada, donor’s answer to the escalation of Israeli colonial and closure policies was the allocation of vast amounts of funding as Band-Aid solution to the deteriorating situation. Rather than confronting closure and other Israeli policies from the outset, the aid community responded “by shifting to emergency assistance while attempting to maintain a veneer of medium-term development focus and continuing rhetorically to frame its assistance programme within a broader state-building objective” (Le More, 2005:14). In doing so, donors not only continued to ignore or deliberately downplayed the Palestinian territorial, demographic, socio-economic and political fragmentation, they also provided a safety net for Israeli violations that reduced the sense of urgency for finding a political solution challenging the ‘new’ *status quo*. The paradox, as Le More aptly notes, is how despite Israel’s ‘facts on the ground’ becoming more compelling in its disavowal of Palestinian statehood, the international community stubbornly held to the idea of sustaining a futile ‘peace process’ through an unprecedented amount of aid (2005). This contradiction is even more striking when looking at donor’s long stance with regards to closure and mobility restrictions. From the World Bank’s publication of the 1993 study *Investment in Peace*, which became the blueprint for donor intervention underpinning the Oslo accords, to the Paris

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with USAID official. Tel Aviv. August, 2012

Economic Protocol and major socio-economic projects of the Oslo era, all have been rhetorically consistent about the need to develop appropriate transport infrastructure and removing mobility restrictions for persons and goods as a prerequisite for successful Palestinian economic development and viable statehood. Yet, despite this clear diagnosis and the consolidation throughout the years of the closure regime, donors have systematically failed to take these realities into account and most crucially, have gradually ended up incorporating these colonial precepts into development policy making.

The apartheid roads controversy effectively underscored the entrenchment of a trend among certain donors to endorse and adapt to closure, territorial fragmentation and separation. Unable or unwilling to politically challenge these policies, and in the virtual absence of criticism from Palestinian officialdom, some donors such as the USAID and the WB have increasingly adopted Israel's Bantustanization logic as a means to revive and lend credibility to a decade of 'peace negotiations'. The frustration with Israeli policies and the belief that colonial occupation has become irreversible, as Sara Roy contends, effectively led to the "formalization, institutionalization and acceptance by Israel and key members of the international donor community of Palestinian territorial and demographic fragmentation, cantonization, and isolation." (2010:4). The consolidation of this shift towards the normalization of closure and its accompanying infrastructure (i.e. fabric of life roads and checkpoints) can be situated in the unilateral Israeli disengagement plan and more specifically, in the US brokered Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA, 2005); a treaty solely designed to deal with the question of closure and mobility restrictions with the aim of promoting economic development and improving the humanitarian situation. These initiatives, it is worth noting, came on the heels of the Quartet's "Roadmap for Peace" that formally endorsed Israel's intention to retain major colonial settlements and infrastructure on the West Bank as part of any future peace deal –these were the venues that most donors embraced to promote Palestinian economic recovery, institutional reform and state building in years to come.

### **Rendering closure infrastructure into a technocratic and nonpolitical question**

The AMA is crucial for it rendered closure, mobility restrictions and its related infrastructure into a technical and nonpolitical question (see Ferguson, 1990; Li, 2007). In effect, the agreement delineated two simultaneous processes that underwrote the normalization of closure among development actors while subsuming fabric of life roads and checkpoints as inexorable features of the occupation's unfolding logistical economy. On the one hand, the agreement placed Israel's 'security' conditions before Palestinian freedom of movement, let alone other fundamental rights. The AMA provided that, "consistent with security needs Israel will facilitate the movement of people and goods within the West Bank and minimize disruption to Palestinian lives" (2005). Incidentally, and as noted above, this balancing act is the very premise informing the fabric of life program. In this way, not only Palestinian movement remained subjected to Israeli colonial policies, it also made both compatible. As argued by the WB in follow up reports about the agreement's implementation, "the twin goals of enhanced Israeli security and improved Palestinian movement are compatible in the near-term" (2006:1). The AMA, on the other hand, sought to reconcile Palestinian economic development with closure by improving rather than dismantling the regime itself. As the Bank stated "Economic activity cannot recover if people and goods are unable to move with a tolerable degree of efficiency" (Idem). Efficiency, the bank contended, would be achieved through "the introduction of modern management techniques and new scanning technologies [that] will permit the creation of a regime that provides high levels of security for Israel as well as commercial efficiency." (Idem:4) In effect, the refining of the closure regime to stabilize the Palestinian economy –through upgrading checkpoints, modernizing back-to-back procedures, and rehabilitating roads and related transport infrastructure— created an inexorable link between the two and *de facto* normalized the bureaucracies and infrastructure of closure. This technocratic exercise, which was meant to gradually remove mobility

restrictions, ended up emptying closure of political meaning and turning this fundamental issue into a purely economic affair. Ultimately, as Sayigh argues, the AMA was “the most developed and detailed attempt to maintain the essence of the long-standing international approach while working within the framework of overall Israeli security and territorial and administrative control” (2007:10).

USAID’s mobility improvement projects in the West Bank are a case in point for they conform squarely to AMA’s double logic –of normalizing and reconciling closure with prospects of Palestinian economic recovery and state building. In the instance of fabric of life roads it is interesting to see how the controversial and political nature of this undertaking became gradually diluted as it was discursively and programmatically incorporated into the agency’s flagship scheme, the Infrastructure Needs Project (INP). Launched in 2008 with a pledged budget of more than \$1 billion, the INP is a comprehensive infrastructural plan – including roads, water and sanitation—that seeks to “support a moderate Palestinian government through the rehabilitation of existing, and the building of, new infrastructure required for a viable Palestinian State.” (USAID, 2010b:1). As fabric of life roads were subsumed under INP’s transportation projects, this infrastructure was scripted with new attributes that significantly differed from and concealed its original purpose. In this way fabric of life roads can be seen in light of the enlightened goals set by the agency for road infrastructure more generally. That is, facilitating the movement and access of people and goods, supporting the development of a sustainable economy, forming a contiguous road network and improving the quality of life for Palestinians in the West Bank (USAID, 2013). These roads however are not the only way in which USAID contributes to the material and symbolic rationalization of closure.

The agency –following World Bank recommendations and in close coordination with Spiegel’s fabric of life program—also invests vast financial and technical resources into upgrading Israeli military checkpoints and related infrastructure *within* and on the borders of the West Bank<sup>13</sup>. These efforts, which are intimately related to fabric of life roads, are presented as Palestinian ‘trade related’ projects to facilitate the flow of goods and people according to AMA principles. The Palestinian Integrated Trade Arrangements (PITA) is revealing in this respect. PITA was introduced as an Aid package to Palestinians with the aim to “accelerate the speed, efficiency, and security of Palestinian commercial flows into and out of the West Bank and Gaza” (USAID, 2005). In practice the project, which was allegedly imposed on the PA<sup>14</sup>, delivered technical assistance and border crossing technology to the GOI worth \$50 million—mainly container scanners—with the aim of supervising and reducing inspection times of Palestinian commercial cargo at major crossings in the territories. Not only this consolidated the existence of military checkpoints, it also added an extra layer of security that increased the already cumbersome, expensive and dehumanizing procedures at the crossings (Thagdisi-Rad, 2010). By adopting this particular trade approach, closure infrastructure is repositioned in the realm of trade economics in ways that give Israel’s security concerns priority over Palestinian economic recovery (*idem*). These attempts at reform notwithstanding are effectively redundant when goods and people are unable to enter or exit the territories in the first place due to random and capricious internal and external closure. Projects like PITA are thus a way of lubricating the prison door’s hinges of occupation, an exercise that is far from being an instrument of development.

### **Enacting statehood**

If for the USAID and the WB the normalization of closure-related infrastructure is mostly driven by an economic rational, for the PA endorsing controversial projects such as fabric of life roads can also be seen as attempts to enacting statehood and sovereignty over the

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<sup>13</sup> Projects within the West Bank include the road leading to Qalandia Checkpoint in the Ramallah Area or the Container Checkpoint in Bethlehem. Project on the border of the West Bank include Huwwara military checkpoint.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with former USAID’s subcontractor consultant. Ramallah. August, 2012

Bantustan through the state building rituals associated to infrastructure development. Indeed, the repair, rehabilitation and construction of road infrastructure increasingly acquired a prominent role in the PA's agenda after the intifada. This is reflected in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP), which highlights the crucial role of developing sound infrastructure such as roads, electricity or water as the backbone of the economy and to enable progress towards the implementation of the Government's entire national policy agenda (see PRDP 2007, 2011). The plan assumes that establishing Palestinian 'facts on the ground', in the form of efficient institutions and infrastructures, will generate bottom-up growth and facilitate state building. As former Palestinian Prime Minister and chief architect of the PRDP Salam Fayyad put it, rolling out infrastructure and building institutions is about "the power of ideas translated into facts on the ground – taking Palestinian statehood from abstract concept to reality" (Fayyad, 2010). Despite these lofty ideals and confronted to the blunt realities and asymmetric power relations of occupation however, the PA ended up instilled a logic of adapting to and improving the conditions of settler colonialism to some of the plan's infrastructure projects. This is the case of the 'Road Improvement' (RI) program that seeks to rehabilitate the Palestinian road network by incorporating fabric of life roads such as the infamous Wadi Al Nar corridor. As in the case of the USAID, the PA disguises the political nature of these roads as assets capable of increasing national prosperity, enhancing the quality of life, restoring economic growth or enabling private sector development (PRDP, 2007). Roads are however not the only example in which the PA has been compelled to lend its formal approval to settler related infrastructure that actually undermines prospects of statehood and liberation. In effect, the Oslo framework has facilitated this practice in a number of other instances such as the approval of water infrastructure projects that enable the further expansion of colonial settlements (Selby, 2013).

This mobilization and distortion of the symbolic and material character of infrastructure reveals how endorsing fabric of life roads becomes on the one hand a way of ante-posing 'development' efforts to the struggle against occupation. And, on the other, it indicates the PA's obsessive impetus to appear 'real' by enacting state policies that it considers commensurate with international 'norms' to gain local and overseas recognition. Lending legitimacy to fabric of life roads and closure related infrastructure is thus not only a way to cover up widespread colonial fragmentation and racist policies it is also a desperate attempt at showing that the Palestinian enclaves, like in the case of South African Bantustans such as Transkei, has "acquired 'modern facilities' enacted and rehearsed through prestige projects and modernising etiquette" (Jones, 2002:39). As Fayyad has consistently argued, "Once you get the whole world thinking that we are ready for a state — that it looks like a state, that there are government processes and infrastructure — then the only thing left to deal with is ending the occupation" (Sanders, 2011). This position underlines how politics is declared an unhelpful distraction to the work of development, politics as a dirty word in a context of military occupation. Moreover, this faith in the universal incantations of state building not only exacerbates the contradictions between PA's development aims and the actually existing structural settler conditions, it also increases the alienation of and gap with the Palestinian population. In fact, even when these celebrated 'national infrastructural achievements' have improved the lives of many Palestinians in the short-term; on the ground the political attitude towards these projects is often one of scepticism. Take for instances these incisive local sayings: "The PA is covering the road to self-determination in asphalt", "We have the sewers; all that's left is the sovereignty", or "The streets of Ramallah are paved with white stones – who needs Jerusalem?" (Kanafani, 2011).

Taken together these are precisely the rituals of development and state building that were disrupted by the apartheid road controversy and that highlight the material and symbolic aspects of the spatialities of development in the Palestinian context. These attempts by international development actors to normalizing fabric of life roads show that not only are these deceitfully portrayed as symbols of progress coterminous with development and economic growth; its territorialization is also seen as constitutive of power and legitimacy, a form of

making visible the 'state in the making'. Most importantly, the formal approval of these projects ultimately lends legitimacy to and reinforces Israel's colonial policies. In effect, as Christopher Parker suggests, uncritical aid giving, and I would add national development practice, "only serve to make effective Palestinian disempowerment under the guise of autonomy bearable over the short-term, while Israel pursues its strategic interests of procuring sovereignty over the land and its resources". The irony, Parker continues, "is that in order to sustain a process which claims to be leading towards the building of a Palestinian state, the tactics which are being used to sustain the process undermine the future ability of that state to sustain itself." (Parker, 1999:226).

## CONCLUSIONS

Attentive to critics who argue that the development literature has focused too narrowly on infrastructure without acknowledging the relations of power in which these networks are invested, as well as those who call for more attention to exploring the distinctive and specific spatial nature of settler colonialism (Banivanua Mar and Edmonds, 2010), this paper has provided a framework to explore the uneven and racialized nature of infrastructure development in a contemporary settler colonial context. One, which might be alone in being subjected to a form of settler colonialism that receives the support of a cohort of international development actors and financial institutions to effectively sustain and reproduce itself. For if, as Neve Gordon contains, Oslo's ingenious idea was to outsource the responsibility of occupation to the native administration (Gordon 2008), no less effective has been Israel's engagement of a broad coalition of donors to provide a veneer of legitimacy and generous financial resources that actively support the relentless dispossession of the Palestinian population.

Through reconstructing the genealogy of fabric of life roads in the West Bank, this study has shown how these networks are bundled with larger geopolitical and geoeconomic processes, and it has also interrogated their capacity to hold a developmentalist vision which as our case demonstrates is in practice productive of segregation patterns. As such, this paper demonstrates the ways in which these roads are profoundly embedded in development practices and discourses structured around coherent narratives of economic growth, peace and state building that distort, rationalize and consolidate the concrete realities of settler colonial subordination. By exposing the material and symbolic assumptions and premises underpinning the development of fabric of life roads, this paper illustrates the complex and contingent 'power geometries' (Massey, 1993) shaping these networks but also how they are the result from the mediation of interests and demands from a wide range of actors –including the settler state, the military as well as donors and the native administration— that together influence and reshape Palestinian geographies. This reveals not only the complicity of international and national development practice in shaping settler colonialism but also how the later is not so much the product of a linear plan by a single actor but rather a contingent process that emerges from a multiplicity of shifting and opportunistic acts of political and economic self-interest. A caveat which as this paper has shown allows to moving beyond accounts that underestimate the role of particular actors seen to be neutral or to advance Palestinian interests in ways that raise crucial questions about their accountability.

By critically engaging with infrastructure projects, as a central feature of the development enterprise, we hope to have contributed thus to a better understanding of the contemporary political challenges facing the Palestinian development endeavour. As such, the case study advanced in this paper has not only exposed how particular projects with positive short-term impacts enable the further colonial fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic in the long run, it has also sought to underline broader aspects of the Palestinian development project. And more specifically how the socio-economic and spatial inequalities built into the Oslo architecture are internalized and manifested through the spatialities of development in the

West Bank. Ultimately, this paper has attempted to show the ways in which settler colonialism solicits development as a way to territorialize itself. In other words, how development is transformed into a corollary of settler colonialism. The object of this paper is not however to dismiss development altogether, for as Joel Wainwright boldly puts it “we cannot not want development” (2008:10), but rather to problematize the prevalent confusion and optimism that exists around current forms of Palestinian development and the possibilities they might offer under a regime of prolonged settler colonialism.

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