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EDITORIAL

#05–2015

Reconfiguring Periphery: Localizing Spatial Dependencies of Capitalism in West Asia and North Africa

Andrea Fischer-Tahir and Dimitris Soudias

Keywords: MENA; Space; World-System Theory; Resistance; Knowledge; Capitalism; Periphery

Crossing Through the Fields

Aden, May 2007: Southern Yemenis take to the streets by the thousands to voice their anger about insufficient pensions and forced retirement to the central government in Sanaa. Sidi Bouzid, December 2010: the suicide of a young street vendor sparks local unrest in a medium-scale town, leading to the Tunisian Revolution. Dara'a, March 2011: massive protest against political and economic injustice unfolds in the Syrian medium-scale town, marking the beginning of an uprising that eventually evolved into a civil war.

On an empirical level, people in all of these places react to the experiences and fears of increasing poverty and social marginalization. In the first example, the context is a unified state in which the inhabitants of a former socialist-ruled territory in the south became dependent on the political, economic and cultural decisions of the centralized government in the north (Augustin). In the second example, the Tunisian regime and its political and economic elites pursued a "selective redistribution of resources" that resulted in "the acute and systematic marginalization of the southern, central and western regions, as opposed to the concentration of wealth and power in the north and the east of the country" (Ayeb 486-87). As for the Syrian case, popular unrest started in a part of the country that has been ignored by Bashar al-Assad's neoliberal development policies. The upheaval has been interpreted as a popular reaction to the violation of a social contract that "was based on the state's provision of social welfare and development in exchange for the population's renunciation of political participation" (Ruiz de Elvira and Zintl 330).

Therefore, on an analytical level, these cases exemplify how spatial disparities and spatially manifested social injustice lead to forms of resistance. They indicate that the inner peripheries in the countries addressed here are products of unequal resource and revenue distribution, as well as of specific capital investment policies. This META issue turns its focus to "periphery." Conceptually speaking, we do not conceive peripheries to be places that are localized on the "natural" margins of a particular regional, national or global entity. Neither do we consider them to be essentialized and unchangeable. Instead, we assume that peripheries are manifestations of spatial differentiation. They are processual in that they emerge, transform, and sometimes even disappear through

complex economic and political processes, through demographic reconfigurations and through changes in socio-cultural norms and values.

Take the term "Middle East" for example. This neologism originated in English between 1900 and 1902,[1] arising from the political and military imperative of demarcating the region between the "Near East" (at the time denoting the Ottoman Empire including the Balkans), and the "Far East" (which referred to China). These regional depictions are based on a view of the world with Europe at its center. The "Middle East" is therefore constituted as inherently peripheral to Europe, not merely as a depiction, but especially with regards to unequal power relations in terms of economic exploitation, and the spatial "othering" (in terms of socio-cultural norms and values) of this area and its people. It is for these reasons with relation to our conceptual assumptions about "periphery" that we decided to use the less-Eurocentric terms of West Asia and North Africa as geographic labels.[2]

With this in mind, we broadly define "periphery" alongside Andrea Fischer-Tahir and Matthias Naumann as spatially materialized "inequality of power relations and access to material and symbolic goods that constructs and perpetuates the precedence of the centers over areas that are marginalized" (18).

This approach is influenced by dependency theory and world-system theory (WST), both of which have been developed by scholars of the global North *and* South alike. Scholars such as Raúl Prebisch and André Gunder Frank, and later Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin or Dieter Senghaas acknowledged that capitalist modes of production hold the world in a tight grip. In situating their analyses on a global scale, they suggest that the world became divided into "cores" or "centers" and "peripheries" and "semi-peripheries." While the former are centers of capital accumulation and concentrated political power, the latter are dependent on those centers, but they will eventually transform in one way or another into "developed" societies. Drawing on this paradigmatic approach, generations of researchers have investigated the societies of the South in terms of manifestations of unequal power distribution, dependencies and developmental transformations in their relations to the North. Feminist scholars in particular have highlighted the gender dimension of the capitalist penetration of the South and forms of neo-colonialism (Ward; Blumberg; Mies), whereas neo-Marxists were in search of the revolutionary subject, which they—at

least partly—have identified in the "marginalized" of the earth (Kay; Quijano). Embedded in the matrix of global economy, the "center-periphery" conceptualization found its way into the academic study of West Asia and North Africa. In approaches based on political economy, this concept came to challenge the *rentier state* debate that was so dominant in the study of the region.[3] Some works explored the "center-periphery" distinction in contexts where central governments sought to "discipline" minority groups at the geographical margins (Entessar). Others applied the approach to any form of power negotiation between central and peripheral actor groups in conflictual configurations (Schetter and Glassner; Wedeen). Dependency theory and WST are also echoed in more recent debates on the ongoing processes of social and political transformation in West Asia and North Africa, especially with regards to urban-rural disparities and inner urban spatial differentiation (Fischer-Tahir; Bouziane, Harders, and Hoffmann).[4]

In this latter trend, different academic discourses and fields overlap. The heritage of dependency theory and WST meets the "spatial turn" in the humanities and social sciences, which is closely linked to the work of Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre as well as to Anglophone critical

geographers such as David Harvey, Neil Smith or Doreen Massey. In the study of West Asia and North Africa, researchers seemingly take for granted that "[we] do not live, act and work 'in space' so much as by living, acting and working we produce space" (Smith 85). Drawing on Foucault, it became a matter-of-course to discuss power and governmentality in their structured and structuring relation to space. In addition, researchers appropriated Lefebvre's spatial triad of *perceived*, *conceived* and *lived space*. The experienced materiality of space production involves political decision-making, practices of capital investment, and built infrastructure. The representation of space is being organized by the means of scientific and technocratic symbols, concepts or maps. Lived space, finally, refers to practices of negotiating norms, values, lifestyles and identities, and takes into account signifying practices and experience in everyday life (Lefebvre 33). Translating this triad into a methodological tool, territories labeled "peripheral" can be grasped in a more systematic way.

Our focus on "periphery" is also a response to the dominant patterns of investigating the so-called Arab Spring and the current wars, which are so dramatically affecting the lives of millions in West Asia and North Africa. Researchers tend to explain events in the spaces of violence through such notions as religion, ethnicity, communaritarism, tribalism, or authoritarianism. More recently, debates have even pathologized empirical observations and have made use of the catchphrase "trauma"—a concept that originally traveled from the fields of medicine and psychoanalysis to the humanities and social sciences.[5]

While it is not our intention to completely abandon established patterns of conflict description, we do seek to turn the debate towards approaches that are more grounded in political economy. Therefore, we suggest discussing "periphery," and the various ways in which people cope with and resist marginalization, in their relation to capitalism. In doing so, we draw on Neil Smith and his suggestion that certain territories become neglected and disconnected from "development"—as is shown in this META issue's case studies on Southern Yemen, central Tunisia and southern Syria—not because these are remote areas but because of particular politics of capital investment. Smith termed this process "uneven development," which he conceived not as some sort of misapplication of best-practice capitalist development policies, but rather as an intrinsic feature of the capitalist modes of production grounded in the inherent contradictions of capitalism. In the antagonistic relationship between capital and labor (and similarly between center and periphery) for example, what makes the capitalist rich makes the worker poor and vice versa. In this configuration, the capitalist has the interest to continue exploitation and the worker the interest to stop exploitation. This conflict is manifested in disciplinary techniques imposed on workers as well as their practices of resistance. Equally contradictory, capital must be constantly invested in built environments in relatively fixed and enduring ways. Yet, it also needs to remain mobile in order to be able to circulate properly. The concentration and de-concentration of capital creates "see-saw movements" (Smith 152).

It is for these contradictions that uneven development occurs, leading to spatial differentiation and the creation of peripheral spaces. These processes can be identified on various scales: global, regional, national, or local—the latter of which may point to urban fragmentation. However, these systematic scales are, in "reality," much more interrelated and overlapping. In this regard, Doreen Massey has pointed to the increasing global-local interdependencies of the "changing spatial organization of the relations of production and the division of labor" (38). Through these considerations, we seek to encourage scholars

to re-think "periphery" as a product of a global-scale imagination (as created by dependency theory and WST) by means of finding ways to make these global-local interdependencies visible.

Discussing "Peripheral Spaces" and "Periphery"

This issue represents a collection of articles that provides conceptual thoughts and empirical research on spatial differentiation and dependencies. It is designed as a critical reflection on "periphery." Thus, the *meta*-article of this issue, written by **Hartmut Elsenhans**, sheds light on the historical journey of the notion of "periphery" and its antipode "center"/"core." He argues that this approach helps to meaningfully describe the positions within the international system, but criticizes that "center-periphery relations" do not explain why capitalism exists. With regard to West Asia and North Africa, he states that "underdevelopment" does not result from unfair resource transfer to global "centers" but rather from a lasting shortage of national food production and the "greed of Western capitalists, Arab rentier state classes and middle classes."

The significance of food production and spatialities of food insecurity do also matter in our *anti/thesis* section. Outlining recent spatialities of hunger and conflict in the region, **Jörg Gertel** takes a critical stance towards "center/periphery," pointing out their limited explanatory range. Instead of thinking in polarizing terms and territorially fixed nation-states, he advocates approaches that investigate post-national configurations of food insecurity and the new temporal modes of actions that shape spaces of hunger.

Cilja Harders argues in favor of "center/periphery" as a fruitful way of making asymmetric power relations visible. Yet, the "over-deterministic" connotation attached to this notion, as well as the global scale inherent to the concept, should be abandoned. Arguing from a feminist perspective on knowledge production, she suggests "provincializing" and "localizing" the core-periphery relations in order to highlight the agency of human actors.

Efforts to localize "periphery" is what all the authors of our articles in the *focus* section have in common. **Anne-Linda Amira Augustin** turns our attention to Southern Yemen. She discusses processes of change in the economy, demography, and political decision-making as well as in socio-cultural norms and values since the Yemeni unification and the subsequent war in 1994. Based on material from extensive field research, she highlights how the individual and collective experience of marginalization triggers discourses of independence.

Britta Elena Hecking provides the reader with insights into strategies of coping with social marginalization. Her local focus is the spatially fragmented city of Algiers, where she investigates the daily survival struggle of young street hawkers. These practices of "navigating," she concludes, must be interpreted as both preserving and challenging the status quo.

In a similar vein, **Johannes Frische** describes the practice of "getting by" in urban peripheries of contemporary Tunisia. Investigating how young street vendors narrate encounters with state agents such as the police, he highlights the ambivalent character of state-society relations, which become visible in form of negotiation, rather than in open protest.

Katharina Lenner examines the making of peripheries in Jordan. Focussing on two sub-districts in the country's rural periphery, she shows how marginalization has unfolded over time and how it may further change due to shifts in national development politics. Her main concern is the discursive aspect of constructing and maintaining dependency. She suggests that "conceptualizations of peripheralization" need to engage more seriously with practices of "othering" as discursive forms in the making of peripheries.

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Schluwa Sama sheds light on the transformation of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from a former "periphery" into an "island" of international capital investment. Having been affected over decades by war and persecution, and neglected by the central regimes in terms of development, the cities of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniya are now going through neoliberal transformations. Here, Sama observes practices of business and of leisure in shopping malls, which embody ideas of "modernity" and "progress."

Our issue's focus on "periphery" concludes with a *close-up* article by **Rachid Ouaissa**. He reminds us of the work and life of Frantz Fanon, taking us back to the time the "core/periphery" concept was invented as an explanation for international dependencies. At that time, the concept underlined the need to resist against the spatially manifested injustice of colonialism and capitalism. Ouaissa stresses the influence that Fanon's work had on academic debates and political struggles, and he highlights Fanon's relevance for inquiring dependencies in today's era of neoliberal globalization.

Not spatial differentiation, but spatial exclusion and spatial control are themes of the two articles in the *off-topic* section. **Irene Fernandez Ramos** discusses contemporary Palestinian theater in times of spatial closure and immobilization being imposed by the Israeli state. She shows how theater opens new spaces of representation, which allow for alternative and subversive narratives. Enrico Ille turns our attention to Sudan and political imprisonment. He discusses prison poetry as representation of resistance against a political regime that fosters centralization and the homogenization of its subjects through the aid of political Islam.

In the *review*-section, **Djene Bajalan** reminds us of the Kurdish conflict with a reading of Jordi Tejel Gorgas' book *La Question kurde: Passé et présent* (2014)—a conflict that is closely linked to spatial marginalization and histories of spatial control as a means of disciplining Kurdish rebels. **Hanna AlTaher** completes our issue in providing us with a very thoughtful reading of Haidar Eid's '*Worlding' (Post) Modernism: Interpretative Possibilities of Critical Theory*. With Eid, she argues, research is only meaningful if it also serves the political purpose of critical intervention into relations of exploitation and dependencies.

On Knowing and Knowledge

All of this issue's authors provide critical reflections on "periphery," illustrating and exemplifying the term's analytical value, and/or adding more content to the current established corpus of ideas the term carries. Some put "periphery" into question, criticizing its limited explanatory value and analytical range. In highlighting the making of "peripheries" as a structured and structuring structure–to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu–other authors draw from "peripheralization" as suggested by Fischer-Tahir and Naumann or on the "beyond the center" notion, by Hoffmann, Bouziane, and Harders, in order to stress the processual character of the concept. Having carefully read and edited the articles, there are some striking observations regarding how "periphery" has been used throughout our issue. For most of the contributors "periphery" seems to be a *research tool* that helps to grasp particular types of spatial differentiation. Relatedly but not the same, others name it a *concept*, in the sense of the German *Begriff*. Throughout the articles, research tool and concept seem to have been used interchangeably with *notion*, *approach* or *term*. We may well interpret this empirical finding as a matter of taste and writing style. It would also be possible to consider it as an expression of conceptual multiplicity. But we could also say it is an indicator of representational uncertainty. To make it even more confusing, Cilja Harders suggests (albeit en-passant) dealing with "periphery" and "core/periphery" as a "metaphor" and *Denkfigur*, respectively. At first glance,

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labeling "periphery" as a figure of speech or a figure of thought and interpretation—or put differently, as a corpus of ideas and meanings—may appear to be an invitation to conceptual ambiguity. But, is this helpful for making sense of the world? How can it accommodate our efforts *to (want to) know*?

Anthropologist, Fredrik Barth, understands *knowledge* as whatever "a person employs to interpret and act on the world." He takes knowledge as "a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas of the world," which exists through "social relations" and must be "instantiated and communicated in (…) media as a series of partial representations in the form of words" (3). Barth's approach makes it possible to distinguish between different forms of knowledge (e.g., religious, political, scientific, everyday life-based, profession-related) without hierarchizing academic and science-based technological knowledge at the top and everyday life knowledge at the bottom. Against this background, we consider thinking about "periphery" as a metaphor or *Denkfigur* to be beneficial in comparison to "concept," whose elaboration is a notoriously difficult and seemingly never-ending task. Moreover, representations such as "analytical value" or "analytical range of concepts" as well as "analysis," "description," or "thick description" are

imaginations created under specific circumstances, derived from specific social structures and sets of practices of knowledge production that are governed by particular interests and rules. Such representations are what Donna Haraway termed "situated knowledges."

Take this issue's articles for example. Although admittedly unintended, our result is an issue, where, in most sections, the authors are in one way or another linked to the editors, be it through PhD supervisors, close colleagues or the same alma mater. This means that the knowledge represented in this issue cannot be assessed adequately without taking into consideration the various and overlapping "master-disciple" and other social relations. Equally unintended but just as relevant, our issue is a compilation of three generations of social science scholarship—from Professor Emeritus to doctoral students. The ways in which our authors *do* research is influenced not only by their disciplinary background, but also by the politics of knowledge production of their time and, in many ways, by the different "turns" (be it the spatial turn, the cultural turn, the relativist turn, or the interpretive turn) in postmodern social sciences.

Not surprisingly, epistemological positions, logics of inquiry, arguments, vocabulary/terminology, and modes of representing knowledge vary between articles, and perhaps, this is what constitutes the value of our issue: It does not merely discuss the journey of "periphery" through space and time. It also represents that very journey.

Notes

[1] Some claim the term has been first used in 1902 by an American, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan (Lockman 98). Others assert an earlier use of the term by a British officer, General Sir Thomas Edward Gordon, in 1900 (Koppes 95).

[2] We say "less" because it is us, two Europe-based editors, who use these labels.

[3] See the contribution by Elsenhans in this issue.

[4] Dependency and WST also find an echo in current debates of German human geography, political science and planning studies dealing with "rural peripheries," "shrinking cities" and "urban fragmentation." See Belina, Best, and Naumann; Bernt; Kühn and Bernt.

[5] These reflections are an outcome of discussions with our colleagues of the research network "Re-Configurations. History, Remembrance and Transformation Processes in the Middle East and North Africa"; a special thanks to Laura Ruiz de Elvira and Christoph Schwarz.

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META

#05–2015

The Concept of the Periphery as a Constitutive Part of the Capitalist World System

Hartmut Elsenhans

The category "periphery" is useful for describing positions in the international system. The analytical content however, is limited: Under capitalist conditions, overcoming "underdevelopment"/peripheral positions in the world system do not depend on the availability of surplus. Instead, overcoming "underdevelopment" has been achieved by devaluation-driven, export-oriented manufacturing, and therefore, by deliberately accepting exploitation for achieving comparative advantage. With regards to the MENA region, this "East Asian strategy" seems unfit because of limited capacities in wage goods production, especially food.

Keywords: Development; World Systems; Euro-Arab Cooperation; Imperialism; Export-Led Manufacturing

Introduction

The *center* and *periphery* are fashionable concepts. They found their way from economic geography to all disciplines of social, and even economic sciences. In this expansion, they have taken several guises, but have remained most often descriptive concepts. Their relevance in explaining the actual state of global structures is the claim that a position within the international hierarchy determines countries' possibilities for dealing with the challenges of growth, autonomy and equality—one's growth or "underdevelopment" are considered to result from this position within the international hierarchy. Local economies are ultimately shaped from their position in such a global system.

The Center and Periphery as Labels

Wherever there are divisions of labor with products important for human life, there are centers and peripheries. Agriculture requires, as do recreational activities, large areas. Other activities require the close proximity of the producers who participate in a production chain. Cities are an early manifestation of the formation of such centers and peripheries. For long periods of time, it was believed that industrial activities were concentrated in the most technically developed regions i.e. the core areas. However, industry increas-

ingly migrates to "less developed" areas. Industries move from their coastal centers to the interior, as is happening in China. With the exception of some long-standing geopolitical routes, there seem to be few stable distributions between the roles of the center and the periphery. The aforementioned exceptions include: The Bay of Bengal to the branches of the Indian Ocean that surround the Arabian Peninsula, the routes from the Indus Valley to the mouths of the Ganga, and the passages from central Asia to China and India. In nearly all of these cases, the centers are at the endpoints or the crossings of trading routes and are privileged as the collecting points of monopoly rents—normally the regions of high agricultural surpluses.

Hierarchical relations are linked to politics and culture. The pre-capitalist city was the center of administration and the "dominant culture". From the city, began the process of state-building in the Indian and African contexts—even if dynasties had established their own cities outside the urban economy with its concentration of rising rebellious social classes. Fatehpur Sikri was built (late 16th century) as a political center in the Mughal Triangle (Delhi, Agra, Jaipur) but did not replace the commercially much more important cities of Agra and Delhi. By imitating the

Asian quest for unlimited state power, the absolutist European monarchies displaced their centers of government from Paris to Versailles (17th century), and from Berlin to Potsdam (18th century).

From the phenomena of cities dominating their surroundings, theories developed that explained inequality as the inevitable consequence of specialization. In the most diverse cultural settings, it was argued that solidarity of the brain and the stomach did not allow the stomach to revolt against the brain and the brain's claim to superior income. Those who opposed such organic interpretations of the political order claimed that the center did not serve the periphery but rather exploited it and contributed to its further decay. From such theories, the stable dichotomies between center and periphery are deduced.

Center and Periphery as Analytical Instruments for Modeling the Dynamics of the Global System

An uneven development with the continuous growth of the center, and with its continued dominance over a periphery that it exploits, has become dominant in Western and Southern interpretations of the global system—the result being that changes in this set-up are believed to come only from conscious modification of
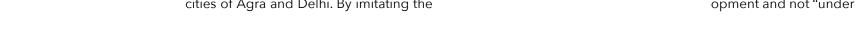
the position of a local area in the global unequal hierarchy.

This view is not shared by mainstream neoclassical economics, which expect the convergence of different localities. Growth is interpreted as the result of capital formation such that an increase in the use of a production factor leads to diminishing returns. When capital is combined with more labor, its productivity declines. Capital will migrate from industrially more advanced regions, defined as regions with higher capital intensity of production, to less advanced regions where labor is still plentiful. The periphery is less advanced but is favored in its growth by the declining capital productivity in the center. The periphery is catching up with the center in economic growth and productivity.

Although they introduce exploitation of the periphery by the center, Marxist theories of imperialism agree with this perspective. Rosa Luxemburg (286-87) expects capital to migrate to the not-yet-capitalist areas, which are perceived as being dominated by the natural economy,[1] until the natural economy is absorbed and capitalist relations of production have become generalized. Lenin (279) shares a similar view as he assumes that capital in the periphery will create capitalist societies and technical development and not "underdevelopment" as

argued later by dependency theory. In both theories, the periphery becomes transformed by being instrumentalized for resolving the contradictions in capitalist growth in the center. Ironically, it is the periphery that becomes developed by this instrumentalization.

It was only when the limits of the capitalist growth impact in not-yet-capitalist countries was diagnosed, as happened mainly during the 1930s Great Depression, that economic theories claimed that capitalism led to "underdevelopment" and even deepened polarization. Development-thinking as a means of correcting the spontaneous tendencies of the market, initially in the form of an obligation of the late colonial state, developed most when the national liberation movements strived for their freedom subsequent to World War II.

From the Indian complaints about the drain of India in the early 19th century to modern anti-imperialist discourse, there is continuous argumentation that the periphery has been blocked from development and equality in performance in comparison to Europe and North America—those blocking factors being the conscious or unconscious working of multiple interests in the "developed" world, be it trade interests, financial interests through economic rents, political

and strategic interests, etc. This discourse is becoming a material force in the "underdeveloped" world that imperialist powers can no longer afford to neglect. These views became prominent in the wake of the economic depression of the 1930s when the "underdeveloped" world was particularly hit, especially by declining terms of trade. The deteriorating terms of trade were only the consequence of structural blockages, which kept the societies of the periphery from being able to accede to the mechanisms of capitalist growth—mechanisms which worked rather successfully in the center despite all their contradictions.

New theories were developed, initially by the nationalist Right in Europe (Manoïlescu), which alleged that the unregulated capitalist world economy would inflict the periphery with "underdevelopment" by exploitation and by imposing unequal specialization—a problem that the periphery could overcome only by gaining independence in order to avail itself of state power as an instrument in the hands of newly rising dynamic national elites.

Marxist positions had to accept that their idea that the metropolitan working classes would carry out their historical mission of replacing capitalism by socialist revolution was misguided. Marxists in the West,

but also in the Soviet Block, took notice of the nationalist revolutions in the South. Western Marxism, more than the Marxism of the Communist world movement, increasingly perceived in the *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon) the new revolutionary subject. Capitalism had not established capitalist growth in the periphery, yet, a revolutionary subject had emerged without capitalism. Marxism joined dependency theory while very few Marxists stuck to the old idea of imperialism as a pioneer of capitalism (Warren). Post-war Marxism, World Systems theory, and Soviet-style Marxism converged in accepting that polarization was inevitable under the conditions of dominance of a capitalist world system.

New variants of a Marxist critique of political economy and World Systems theory became prominent in debates on why the periphery was locked into "underdevelopment" under capitalist dominance. World Systems theory (Wallerstein, Modern World System I esp. 350f.) argued that more "developed" nations were able to draw resources from "less developed" countries and so could further their own development by blocking the development of others. Thus, peripheries were necessary for the welfare of the centers. Dependency theory (Furtado; Cardoso and Faletto; Frank) completed this argu-

ment: Not only is the economic dependency of the peripheries favorable to the centers, but also in the interest of the privileged classes in those peripheries—maintaining this dependency kept the peripheries from modifying their unfavorable relationship with the centers.

Why Do Some Countries "Develop" while Others Do Not?

The Arab world fits well into the theories that emerged to explain the locked in "underdevelopment" of the periphery. However, resource-poor countries (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong), followed by the "emerging" countries (People's Republic of China, Vietnam, but also Mauritius or Brazil), began industrializing from the 1970s onward. Some of these newly industrialized countries achieved the level of technical development of the West, even overtaking some Western countries. Notably, China has become the workshop of the world and is ranked second among the world's superpowers.

The discourse about a center and periphery therefore needed to account for the empirical reality of overcoming "underdevelopment" in large tracts of the periphery. However, this change in discourse did not take into account the Arab world and was mostly ignored by the Arab world itself.

The aforementioned approaches, dependency theory and World Systems theory, both believe in stable hierarchies, and insist that inequality enhances the character of the global capitalist economy. The greed of capitalist enterprises pushes them to reduce the cost of labor and resources wherever possible. This allows for the appropriation of surplus produced in the periphery and its use in the center. This additional surplus feeds growth in the center and deprives the periphery of necessary financial resources for investment. By introducing the category of the "semi-periphery", World Systems theory protects itself from being criticized by pointing at the emergence of industrializing countries in the periphery. This is a category for labelling economies that have to be perceived as being more than exploited and locked in to "underdevelopment." World Systems theory describes these economies as having greater resources, having achieved some level of technical improvement, and having disposed of a coherent state apparatus. However, World Systems theory does not explain how these advances in overcoming "underdevelopment" have been achieved either by the effects of the international economy or by the emergence of local forces of resistance. In addition to exploitation of the periphery, Amin (172) sees the periphery

as locked in to a system of relative prices, which are based on relative productivities in the leading industrialized countries. Technologies that promote production in the periphery are blocked because they are too costly in comparison to the specialization of older products.

The appropriation of financial resources through rising prices for raw material exports on the basis of differential rents provided further proof that availability of financial resources does not necessarily lead to "development." Rather, it leads to specialization in those products that Amin did not consider to be growth-promoting. New wealth blinded the Arab elites and forced them to compete for positions within the state apparatus. Because of self-privileging practices, state clashes occurred practically everywhere and resulted from the disparity between the necessity to "develop" and the derailment of that initial commitment to "development." This rendered state classes ultimately dependent on old imperialist powers for the defense of their political power. Neither coherent states nor available financial resources are at the basis of developing the periphery. The vehicle of growth was export-oriented industrialization, with or without multinational corporations. When export-oriented industrialization gained momentum, state

apparatuses emerged that no longer exploited their own economies for political purposes, as strong states in the periphery used to do. These new types of state apparatuses were able to accompany the process of export-oriented industrialization by changing the comparative advantage of their economies by acquiring competitiveness in technology-promoting branches of production. Among these economies, the more successful were those who were able to enlarge their internal markets by social reforms, mainly agrarian reforms, which increased the incomes of large masses of previously impoverished rural populations.

There were increased real mass incomes and low international prices for their labor, which was achieved by currency devaluation. This combination of increased real mass incomes and low labor costs was made possible because such exploitation was accepted by the exports' countries of destination. The exporting countries added labor to their export branches, but simultaneously earned less for their labor than met the costs for survival. They therefore needed to be supplied with necessities from a locally produced surplus of wage goods. At low levels of real mass consumption, the share of food in household spending is high. Because of the suc-

cess of the Green Revolution in some countries, an increasing local surplus was available to feed this additional labor. Furthermore, the success allowed for the marginalized poor to work on their own small farms for the first time.

The theory of the center and the periphery lost two important supportive arguments: Firstly, as countries accepted low prices for their exports, the argument regarding the importance of financial resources lost its weight. Secondly, the insistence on the role of the state as a major and efficient instrument for modifying the unfavorable positions imposed on some countries by the world system was proven equally inaccurate. The "catching up" process did not imply the appropriation of surplus from abroad, but rather the acceptance of exploitation in order to enter new markets. The local surplus of agriculture constitutes a rent and could have been taxed away by the government, as is common in oil production, and subsequently used for employment-creating, state-controlled investment programs. Export-oriented industrialization is a form of mobilization of rent, as is state-financed spending programs (Elsenhans, *Relevance*), however the former is safer from corruptive practices.

The Arab-Mediterranean Periphery

Arab countries have been kept from productively using oil rents. Both social and political discipline was lacking in the state classes, and therefore the rent largesse was not wisely appropriated and allocated. Inefficiency in the realization of investment projects and the lack of coherency in the planned industrial structure only intensified with increasing financial resources. The implications of these political-economic models of the rent-based ruling classes have been discussed in length in the analysis of the state classes of the bureaucratic development societies (Elsenhans, *State, Class and Development*; Ouaissa).

The Arab world has not been able to shift to the strategy that was so successful in East Asia. Not one Arab nation opted for the alternative of devaluation-driven exports. The international price of local labor was higher in the Arab countries than in the East Asian Tiger nations. The nearly unlimited availability of foreign exchange did not make the international competitiveness of local labor imperative for the foreign exchange incomes of incumbent governments. Huge oil revenues were distributed without simultaneously producing internationally competitive products with local labor—that compulsion to be competitive was miss-

ing. The Arab elites were, and still very much are, too rich to feel any necessity to resolve the contradiction between wealth and "underdevelopment" by an intelligent use of rents. These oil economies are so rich that devaluation-driven development is politically difficult to impose because the rich, as well as the poor, oppose it. Intellectuals indulge in pre-Keynesian scenarios of either type: neo-liberals are convinced that wealth creates development, whereas at least some Marxists, especially in rent-dominated countries, assume that fighting against exploitation verbally is enough.

There is, however, an additional problem for the Arab countries. In contrast to East Asian countries, the Arab countries are food-dependent (See the contribution of Jörg Gertel in this issue). If the local currency devalues, imported food becomes more expensive. Even if this food is paid for by oil revenues in many countries, which do not decrease in the case of devaluation, devaluation still appears harmful for a country's capacity to import food.

Granted, food-dependency in the Arab world is an obstacle for any strategy of industrial diversification. The obstacle is not overcome even if devaluation is rejected: New products do not earn less on the world market if the exchange rate

and the Arab international labor costs are lower. In reality, all Arab countries must enter the markets for manufactured goods on the basis of the low prices offered by the East Asian Tiger nations. Neither lack of competitiveness nor food-dependency can be avoided if devaluation is rejected; devaluation would protect the local market better than custom duties, which are always vulnerable to cheating and corruption. Marginalized labor could be hired in order to produce substitutes for currently imported and expensive goods, mass incomes in local currency would increase through higher levels of employment, and those higher mass incomes would contribute to launching new industries with new jobs.

I have argued (Elsenhans, *Comment approfondir* 30) that the food problem could be alleviated by a European-Arab cooperation on the basis of concessional supply of European food surpluses to the Arab world. The success of development policies in the Arab world would make it a large market for imported food because the Arab world will never be able to produce enough food, at reasonable prices, for its current and future levels of population. In a Mediterranean space where both shores contain "developed" economies, Europe would become the granary of the Arab world. In Algeria however, all my

contributions in this direction have been blocked from publication since 2009.

The dependence of the contemporary Arab regimes on rent becomes dramatically clear when, as in 2015, world oil prices fall or the reserves in conventional oil diminish. The wealthy fight against devaluation in order to defend their purchasing power for imported goods, even while it keeps the poor jobless. Redistribution of income in favor of the poor is blocked, which means that any locally-supplied mass market cannot be created let alone increased dynamically. The poor however, remain ambivalent about such inequitable arrangements as long as they receive a small share of the rent.

The appropriation of rent by the periphery is not the inevitable consequence of the center's interest in maintaining hierarchy over and deprivation of the periphery. It is the result of fundamental characteristics of the power structure in capitalism: Capitalism is not maintained by the interests and behavior of the capitalist class, but rather capitalism is maintained by the pressure from the lower classes for higher incomes—a pressure which the lower classes can articulate provided they are empowered, normally by employment (Elsenhans, *Kapitalismus global*; *Saving Capitalism*). If there is no pressure from the working class to create mass con-

sumption, outcomes are determined by the short-sighted interests of the capitalists. The "underdevelopment" of the Arab countries cannot be explained by resource transfers but rather by the greed of Western capitalists, Arab rentiers, state classes and middle classes. However, although the protests of Western capitalists against increases in oil prices were originally voiced loudly, in the end, the redistribution against Western countries through the rise of OPEC was only mildly opposed by Western capitalists as it did not directly threaten their profits.

The Pragmatic Relevance of Center-Periphery Dichotomies

The rise of World System Theory in the 1960s takes its origins from the critique of the exploitation, especially deteriorating terms of trade, of the Global South. It was still linked to the rise of the new left, first in the South and later in the West. Even if not developed by Marxists but by Singer and Prebisch, the theory behind the deterioration of the situation of the Third World and the rise of the new left strengthened each other. In an effort to maintain their audience in this new emerging market for leftist ideas, a substantial part of economists attempted to rapidly integrate themselves into Marxism. Especially outside Paris with its long tradition of Marxist thinking (i.e.

Samir Amin; Bruno Bettelheim), the result was the adoption of a relatively simplistic version of Marxism for which contributions in the *Monthly Review* could be quoted. In its crudest form, it took the world system to be a mechanism only for extracting surplus from the exploited "underdeveloped" world. In its slightly more sophisticated form in the Wallerstein (*The Essential Wallerstein* 88-91) model, it required the periphery to be continuously exploited in order to maintain the center. This was made politically possible by some states, which Wallerstein coined as the semi-periphery, that were less deprived of resources than the periphery.

The whole architecture of these theories collapses however, when it became clear that the periphery is neither needed for the sale of excess production nor as a source of additional surplus to maintain the center. Excess production disappears if wages increase. Increasing real wages do not endanger competitiveness as it is the exchange rate, not the bargain on real wages, which determines the international cost of an economy's labor. The realization of total production (the sale of the production including an average profit rate) requires only appropriate wage increases, a solution which Rosa Luxemburg (116) had excluded because she thought that capitalists were powerful enough to block

real wage increases. Indeed, the capitalists hold such power but only for as long as the expansion of mass demand does not create high levels of employment.

As any investment finances itself, capitalism and capital accumulation do not require a periphery to be exploited in order to maintain the actual accumulation process. Profit is determined by spending on investment and the demand of workers in investment-goods production. The idea of unlimited accumulation, as Wallerstein contends (*The Western Capitalism* 569), is perhaps useful for morally discrediting capitalism, however, it has no basis in serious analysis of the real economy. It can occur only in expanding financial markets where money, which is without counterpart in the real economy, is created through the banking system. Accumulation as investment in the real economy cannot take place if final demand does not increase. The rich cannot increase their consumption because they risk becoming uncompetitive. Without outlets for their money in real investment, and when still having to use money in order to maintain their competitive position, they resort to the financial markets. The extension of the financial markets is itself a sign of the destruction of capitalism, which results from capitalists irresponsibly curtailing

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final demand (Elsenhans, *Die Globalisierung der Finanzmärkte* 528-36).

The very small variations of the capital-output ratio show that one description of capitalism does not apply: Capitalism is not characterized by the accumulation of endlessly increasing capital. In real terms, the value of capital does not increase in relation to total production and therefore also not in relation to total consumption. Capitalists essentially fight against the devaluation of their capital, which technical obsolescence permanently brings about. There is no increase in the working hours embodied in the stock of capital: Because new capital goods are produced by labor receiving higher real wages, capital stocks in industrialized countries normally grow in parallel with the growth of the real wage.

This does not exclude the "periphery" as being a useful concept. It allows one to distinguish between societies where capitalism works for general prosperity and where capitalism has penetrated societies from the outside thereby destroying the conditions for capitalism to develop. In the latter scenario, capitalism introduces some form of capitalist regulation without eliminating rents and the marginality of labor. Where I depart, is the use of "periphery" as an analytical concept. The periphery does not explain why capitalism emerges or why it grows. Economic contributions of the periphery to the center may exist in the form of resources or markets, and may even have an impact on the capitalism to which they flow, but would be replaced by the center's internal resources and sources of demand if they did not exist. The relation between the core and the periphery matters. However, if this relation would not exist, capitalism still would. The capitalist system is capable of overcoming its own contradictions. These contradictions are the consequence of the inexistence of a class that authoritatively speaks the truth about what is necessary for economic development. The result is that the two contending main classes, capital and labor, develop in a trial-and-error process while bargaining on demand expansion. This simultaneously represents the fundamental requirement for further accumulation. This mechanism works, however, only if labor is not disempowered, leaving capitalism in a fragile state. Capitalist contradictions are not rooted in a deficient architecture of capitalism, but rather in the functional dependence of capitalism on the empowerment of labor—a dependence which capital permanently opposes.

Notes

1   According to Rosa Luxemburg's thinking, the natural economy refers to those spheres of economic activity that have not yet been subsumed into the predominant capitalist economy.

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Spatialities of Hunger: Post-National Spaces, Assemblages and Fragmenting Liabilities

Jörg Gertel

This contribution addresses the casual structure and spatialities of food insecurity. Drawing from scholarly debates on periphery, I illustrate the limited explanatory range of state-centered periphery-approaches in order to comprehend the recent constellations of conflict and hunger. I argue that increasingly dynamic and post-national spaces of food insecurity emerge. Due to complex power geometries, these spaces are driven by realigning and territorially-stretched arrangements of action (e.g. global producer-consumer relations), by techno-logically enhanced new temporal configurations (e.g. speculation and high frequency trade in food), by the performances of metrics (e.g. models of food price and value-constructions shaping food security), and by the reflexive effects of knowl-edge production. In order to comprehend these dynamics, concepts capable of cap-turing new assemblages are required.

Keywords: Periphery; Space; Hunger; Insecurity; Assemblages

Introduction

Social unrest, demonstrations and upheavals culminating in the "Arab Spring" reflect the scope of inequality, injustice, marginalization and insecurity within the region. This contribution addresses one of the most important problems impacting local livelihoods, namely food insecurity. Since 2011, people in the Arab world have repeatedly called for the right to bread, freedom, and social justice (ʿaish, ḥurriyya wa adāla ijtimāʿiyya) and for the "fall of the regime" (isqāṭ al-niẓām). Conventional relations between food and governance are at stake. Drawing from scholarly debates on periphery, I will illustrate the explanatory range of periphery-approaches in order to comprehend food insecurity. Although these concepts are still useful for explaining historical constellations of inequality, I argue that they are no longer appropriate tools for describing and analyzing recent constellations of conflict such as the current social production of hunger that is challenging Arab societies. I further argue that both, neoliberal globalization and polycentric financial capitalism—with their quickly changing hotspots—transform the hitherto territorial and temporal form of the food system, including its social institutions, into a new landscape of fragmenting chains of responsibility. Here, liability is failing and

increasingly removed from the producer principle. In order to analyze these processes, new approaches that can unveil these assemblages are needed.

Conceptualizing Periphery

Since the end of European colonialism, development processes have been increasingly captured as an outcome of center-periphery relations: Imperialism and asymmetric divisions of power and influence were identified as key drivers of inequality and persistent poverty (Prebisch; Frank). In the early debate, periphery-approaches within dependency theory were conceptualized as the antithesis to the modernization paradigm. While the latter promised a "catch-up development" to the level of industrializing countries, periphery-approaches point to the dependencies resulting from the colonial experiences of "developing countries." Although not dealing explicitly with hunger, approaches dealing with center-periphery relations highlight the different preconditions that emerge from colonialism and thus point to the structural difficulties and systematic barriers of "catching-up" and "connecting to" the "development level" of industrialized countries. Three influential scholars on the early debates are Johan Galtung, Milton Santos and Immanuel Wallerstein.

In his "Structural Theory of Imperialism" Johan Galtung reveals the relational notion of periphery-concepts. To simplify things, Galtung categorizes the world as being constituted by only two units: By nations of the center and nations of the periphery, whereby, each of the nations is further subdivided into center and periphery. The center nations are thus constituted by center and periphery, as are the periphery nations. The center of the periphery is labeled "bridgehead." Within the imperial configuration, Galtung identifies a harmony of interest between the representatives of both centers, the government of the center, and its bridgehead in the periphery. He argues the gap of living conditions between the two parties is decreasing to zero. Between the two peripheries, however, there prevails a disharmony of interests: Here, the gap of living conditions is increasing. Galtung stresses "Alliance-formation between the two peripheries is avoided, while the Centre nation becomes more and the Periphery nation less cohesive—and hence less able to develop long-term strategies." He concludes, "The total arrangement is largely in the interest of the periphery in the Center" (84). This asymmetry is increasingly fixed. Galtung thus provides a perspective that merges two analytical approaches: An analysis of society that

produces winners and losers within an imperial configuration and an understanding of space that is based on nation-states as territorial entities, which are understood as single space-producing actors. In *Shared Space* the Brazilian geographer, Milton Santos, emphasizes that structures of domination unfold also on smaller scales and are subject to negotiations and shifts. He focuses on "Third World" urban economies and their encounter with modernity. Santos comprehends the Third World city as being constituted by two systems: A modern or "upper circuit" and a traditional or "lower circuit" of the economy. The *shared space* emerges from a superimposition of traditional and modern activities. While the upper circuit is conceptualized as an outcome of technological modernization—represented by capital-dense multinational firms, banks, and monopolies with far stretching relations that reach beyond the city into national and international spaces—the lower circuit consists of small-scale labor intensive activities of the poorer population, which enjoys privileged relations to the region. The articulations and interactions between the two circuits result, according to Santos, in a continuous transfer of capital from local economic activities within the lower to the upper circuit, thereby, causing an increasing deforma-

tion of spatial and social structures and an ongoing polarization of the (urban) society, including its spatial manifestations. Center-periphery relations are thus conceptualized as asymmetric relations between macro- and micro-level, including everyday struggles. However, the driver of inequality continues to be represented as a unilinear process that results from the impact of the West.

Wallerstein's seminal work on the *Modern World-System* conceptualizes the world system and the expansion of the capitalist economy as being structured into core, peripheries, and semi-peripheries. He emphasizes the mechanisms of economic integration and the multitude of fusions between reciprocal-lineage systems (periphery) and redistributive-tributary empires (semi-periphery) with the capitalist world economy (center). Wallerstein thus identifies the historical dimension (imperialism) and the economic structures (market integration) as the key drivers of uneven development. However, by depicting the various and ambiguous contacts, connections, linkages, and interrelationships between colonizers and colonized, Wolf reminds us that the European expansion should not be reduced to unidirectional core-periphery trajectories. The colonized are more than passive objects, rather, "the common people were as much

agents in the historical process as they were its victims and silent witnesses" (Wolf x). Within dependency theory, it nevertheless remains uncontested that the hegemony of European imperialism constituted structurally unfolding power asymmetries. These dynamics have impacted food insecurities until today.

A more recent intervention on "Peripheralization" (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann) seeks to re-politicize the debate about spatial dependencies and social injustice in relation to research positions concerning Eastern Europe. Guided by the observation that the development discourse is losing ground, as depoliticized notions of globalization emerge, the authors comprehend peripheralization as a "constitutive element of capitalism" and as an "analytical tool to explore spatial differentiation" (5-6). From their perspective, peripheries emerge from the logic of uneven development that results from capitalist investment policies. The social production of peripheries is also shaped by technocratic, political, and academic representations, and ultimately by social practices (lifestyles, significations, experiences). Fischer-Tahir and Naumann conclude, "Peripheralization refers to a spatially organized inequality of power relations and access to material and symbolic goods that constructs and perpetuates

the precedence of the centres over areas that are marginalized" (14). This approach hence concentrates on the territorialization of social injustice, fixed by discursive acts and social practices.

In conclusion, classical periphery-approaches are able to explain uneven development as an outcome of imperialism. Here, the structural consequences and their perpetuation into contemporary life are of crucial importance. However, one must ask: What kind of explanatory scope do these approaches develop in order to capture recent constellations of inequality as preconditions for hunger?

Periphery: Critical Reflections

In the following, I will first reflect on the conceptual problems inherent to periphery-approaches. I then investigate the transfer of their key concepts into food system research, and finally, I seek to reveal the consequences if food insecurity in Arab countries becomes the object of investigation.

Three points of critique apply:

(1) The notion of periphery is, from its very inception within the development debate, tied to (Western) assumptions about the role of (national) economies, and is thus based on explicit and implicit numerical procedures, measurements, and comparisons. These interrelations are an outcome

of topological framings and epistemological violence produced by (post-) colonial actors within a world that seems to require continual (numerical) ordering. Nations are, for example, classified as developed, underdeveloped, or least developed and are thus prepared to be segmented into cores and peripheries. The economic foundation of price building markets in a capitalist world system is based on metrics, on standardization, measurements, comparability and hierarchies. These metrics entail the assumption that social relations systems (for example, the knowledge about the rules and resources of a community) are transferrable into numerical relational systems (e.g. a representation of a gross domestic product or a human development index). In this way, complexity is reduced and contextual information about societies is devalued, dissected, and replaced by (artificial) averages and probabilities. Therefore, incommensurable social practices are brought into relation with each other. Yet, periphery-concepts are, so far, not challenging these assumptions.

(2) Periphery-models that aim at comprehending unequal power structures of society are muddled and amalgamated with unfortunate spatial connotations. The notion of periphery not only connotes social marginality but also spatial remoteness. It thus furthers an understanding of space that is reduced to the mere notion of territory. In particular, it conveys a concept of territory that equals a bounded space (i.e. representing and reifying the image of a territorial contiguous nation-state order). But societal power relations are not always reflected in a single territory; rather, they may be articulated with different spaces, or may unfold on different scales or may even remain territorially dispersed. The notion of periphery thus remains vaguely understood in terms of its spatial expressions. In this respect, I share Doreen Massey's notion of space as characterized by three properties: As being an outcome of interactions, as being shaped by multiplicity, and as never being finished but instead being continually made—preliminary and incomplete.
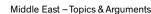
(3) Periphery-models remain too simplistic to capture the recent temporal dynamics of society. Given the increasing speed and acceleration of interactions, which stretch across expansive distances, linking different kinds of actors and assuming different stabilities—with both conjectural and structural impacts—the notion of assemblages becomes crucial. Assemblages can be comprehended as "the composition of diverse elements into some form of provisional socio-spatial formation" (Anderson and McFarlane 124). Three dynamics are drivers of these formations: the privatization of the state, new technologies in communication, and the processes of financialization.

First, linked to the project of neoliberal globalization, the role of the state is shifting: The powers of the state have been "dispersed, decentred and fragmented" (Allen and Cochrane 1071), entailing the privatization of authority, the shift from government to governance, and the proliferation of regulatory bodies. These processes reorganize, destabilize and undermine the state apparatus, and they thereby transfer powers into a multi-scalar institutional hierarchy, which operates beyond the bounded space of national territories (1071). The combined forces of privatization and globalization are "producing massive structural holes in the tissue of national sovereign territory" (Sassen 26). In this sense, hunger can, in part, be comprehended as an outcome of privatizing, shifting and fragmenting social responsibilities.

Second, parallel to the emergence of post-national institutions and territories, the concept of financialization has emerged and has recently become a meta-narrative used to comprehend global socioeconomic changes. After the development era and omnipresent

globalization processes, accelerated financialization looms heavily. Financialization is conceptualized as a process in which expanding and volatile financial capital increasingly penetrates and shapes the "real economy." Furthermore, financialization is restructuring accumulation strategies, the role of both nation-states and private corporations, and it is impacting, more directly than ever before, the livelihood systems of citizens (see below). It is associated with the ambivalent power of financial markets, their simultaneous importance and fragility, and an international financial system of increasingly fragmented responsibilities. Significantly represented by recurrent international food price crises, financial capital and its related actors have also become actively involved in agriculture and the production of food insecurity (Burch and Lawrence, "Towards a Third Food Regime"; Clapp; Gertel, "Krise und Widerstand"). Both the accelerated denationalization of national territory and the financialization of social relations are accompanied by technologically enhanced temporalities of communication. Information about food and food prices is increasingly transferred through high-speed interactions across large distances.

Spatialities of Hunger

Given the new developments in metrics, temporalities, and spatialities one must ask: How have periphery-concepts been translated into research on food systems? In which explanatory range do they unfold, and what kind of insights about Arab countries do they generate? The answers to these questions begin with the current dynamics of the global food system. Six processes are important: (1) As never before, the food riots and protests of 2008 and 2010/2011 illustrate the vulnerability of the poor and the disenfranchised. For the first time in history, demonstrations against international food price hikes occurred simultaneously in a multitude of countries. Due to widespread poverty and water scarcity, Arab countries depend particularly on foreign food, namely on grain imports. Egypt, for example, shows the highest consumption of wheat per capita in the world. (2) Financial speculation with agricultural commodities such as wheat, rice, and corn contributed to the dramatic increases in food prices. Since 2009, more than one billion people suffer from hunger, that being one in seven people, despite the fact that there is sufficient food available for all. Hunger and malnutrition have become the highest health risk with ramifications that are more severe than those of AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis combined. Among the most vulnerable are children, as the consequences of malnutrition are irreversible. (3) The threshold for new food crises and social cleavages is rapidly decreasing. After 40 years of neo-liberalism, deregulation and structural adjustment, the ability for low-income states and their poor households to cope with the effects of price-induced food crises has been reduced. With shrinking buffer potentials of both, public protection (e.g. via subsidies) and personal livelihoods (e.g. via decreasing incomes), international food price fluctuations increasingly affect individual households directly. Furthermore, these adverse effects are no longer limited to only the poor but now also include the evermore-impoverished urban middle classes. (4) Moreover, the stability of global food security is currently questioned by the new scope of technologized food price formation (e.g. computer trade). Step by step virtual transactions substitute human transactions. (5) As a consequence, food security is increasingly commercialized and short-term shareholder profits are expanding. Some nation-states have lost their means of intervention and therefore food security and even national stability in those spaces is increasingly governed by private capital. (6) Commercialized food (in)securities ultimately translate into new spatialities: Due

to urbanization and megacity development, food insecurity and hunger transform into an urban phenomenon. In Arab countries, the situation is even more dramatic. Here, the inhabitants of cities are especially dependent on grain imports and subsequently on volatile food prices. Summing up, the structural reasons of hunger have changed due to the processes of globalization and financialization in recent years. Increasingly, production-consumption-configurations are expanding globally and processes of price building in commodity chains are accelerating, while simultaneously, the fragility of food security for large parts of society is growing. The most significant development to this regard is the ongoing combination and continuous recombination between virtual and tangent actions and transactions. Keeping these dynamics in mind, I asked how these realignments of power structures, including their different spatializations, are captured in the current research on food systems and how they relate to periphery-concepts. Six positions, from top down- to bottom up-approaches, can be distinguished:

1. *Food regime*: a top down-approach. Food regime's proponents draw from world-system theory and investigate the territorially-stretched international interplay between food production and food consumption. They assume that agricultural production systems and food-related commodity chains are embedded in political regimes and are in turn determined by such regimes. Friedmann and McMichael conceptualize *food regimes* as historically significant clusters (norms, rules, institutions) of international food relations, contributing to the stabilization of growth periods in global capitalism. They further argue that phases with stable structures of accumulation are succeeded by transitional periods of experiment and dispute (Friedmann 335). Correspondingly, the first food regime, the "imperial food regime" spanned from 1870 to 1914 and is characterized—according to Anglo-Saxon authors—by British colonial hegemony. Agricultural trade was based on the expansion of grain- and livestock-farming systems amongst settler colonies in temperate climate zones (North America, Argentine, Australia, New Zealand), as well as on the expansion of plantation economies (e.g. cocoa, palm oil) in the tropical areas of the colonies. This included the outsourcing of the British, but also European and especially French, food supply to the colonies.[1] As for the Arab world, the colonial powers in Europe appropriated agricultural products, such as dates and meat (sheep) from North Africa, gum arabic from Sudan, and cotton from Egypt. The transition from the first to the second food regime was crisis-laden: All central relations were reversed, undermined, or restructured (Campbell and Dixon). The formation of the second (Fordist) food regime spanned from 1947 to 1973 (Friedmann). After World War II, the United States emerged as the largest exporter of agrarian products worldwide. Agricultural mass production and US political hegemony marked the peak of this stable phase of economic accumulation, which led to overproduction—especially of grain—and food aid.[2] Another transitional phase and the emergence of a third food regime followed, which has been labeled "corporate control" (McMichael, "A Food Regime Analysis") or "financialization" (Burch and Lawrence, "Towards a Third Food Regime"). The food regime approach thus allows for conceptualizing global food systems as large-scale spatial configurations with changing center-periphery relations.

2. *Globalizing food systems*: The simultaneous processes of territorialization (place-specific practices) and deterritorialization (dissolution of these practices) are particularly important to comprehend the dynamics of globalizing food systems (Goodmann and Watts 39). They involve patterns of convergence and divergence in the territorial organization

of production-consumption-relations. Since the 1970s, global players such as grain trading firms (TNCs like Continental Grain, Cargill, ADM, Bunge, or ConAgra) and investment banks that handle agricultural futures (such as Goldman Sachs) were able to expand and establish their economic position outside the United States. After the 1980s international debt crisis, when deregulation and public austerity measures (e.g. elimination of food subsidies) set in, these players where increasingly able to operate outside state control. They then applied strategies such as global sourcing, engaging in joint ventures, and foreign direct investment, while they adjusted trade with grains to the new technological possibilities (Zaloom). Parallel new regionalization processes emerged within the global food system. Trading blocs became manifest (EU, NAFTA) and bi- and multilateral free trade agreements were signed (Gibbon and Ponte) while a "shrinking development space" for poorer countries resulted from trade related agreements, which were then enforced by the WTO (Wade). Moreover, retail chains increasingly determined food standards and constructed quality (Burch and Lawrence, "Financialization"), which resulted in the realignment of South-North dependencies. Therefore, new trajectories shaped the global food system while the causes and risks of "globalized food crises" multiplied (Gertel, "Dimension und Dynamik").

3. *Global commodity chain* (GCC)-, *filière-* and *value chain*-approaches: These also address the integration of food production within the globalizing food systems, and in doing so, they share assumptions with food regime concepts (Hughes and Reimer). However, in contrast to the latter, their focus is on the products themselves and on the physical movement of commodities. They further focus on processes of value adding and price building during various stages including when food is produced, processed, marketed, and consumed. The industrialization of agriculture has—according to this understanding—enhanced the emergence of new global interdependencies and results in shifting control over food and value-adding chains (e.g. buyer- or producer-driven chains are distinguished) (Bair). The *global production networks-approach*, in contrast, identifies an inadequate focus in these approaches. According to their understanding, investigating commodity circulation and value adding is not sufficient to comprehend the social logic of food systems. Rather, the horizontal entanglements of production, commercialization and consumption must be addressed alongside respective livelihood strategies as they are constitutive for producing food and value. Hence, the contextualization of exchange processes requires a positioning of price building and value adding within the configurations of (social) reproduction.[3] This understanding thus goes beyond a perspective of conventional center-periphery relations. It captures commodity chains as related spaces of action (i.e. as networks of interaction) that not only transgress national boundaries but also connect situations on the micro-level with macro-level developments. It furthermore opens possibilities for a multisided analysis of horizontal entanglements when livelihoods of producers and consumers are related through commodity chains and by histories of exchange and value adding. For Arab societies the international *halal*-market, a US$600 billion market, offers such an example: Producers from Sudan and Somalia compete for market shares in the Gulf States with imported live cattle from Australia and frozen meat from New Zealand, which thereby demonstrates the complex connections between international commodity chains and multiple production systems that are responsible for securing different livelihoods (Gertel, Le Heron, and Le Heron).

4. *Global food price crises*: The analysis of food crises is largely driven by bottom

up-perspectives focusing on vulnerable groups and the poor. Three causalities of hunger are distinguished: (a) *Food production failures*: Here, food insecurity and hunger result from agricultural production problems. For a long time, the relation between food production and hunger has been conceptualized from a Malthusian perspective and has been explained by limited agricultural spaces vis-à-vis a growing population. This simplistic equation has been revised, particularly by the dramatic growth of food production. Yet, in globally entangled food systems, breaks in production and the subsequent increase in prices can be passed across long distances from agricultural areas (e.g. the USA or Ukraine) to consumers in the Arab world. This interaction then translates locally into hunger, malnutrition, and diseases. (b) *Food entitlement failures* (Sen): This concerns food access problems and relates to food prices and purchasing power. Even if food is locally available, food insecurity may prevail due to insufficient resources and poverty. The result is that respective groups often do not have the financial capabilities to buy food on the market. This particularly affects the urban poor. (c) *Food response failures* (Devereux): Here responsibility problems and intervention failure are addressed. According to Devereux, "new" hunger cri-

ses result from inadequate or failed modes of interventions. This is often the case with restrictive political regimes and violent conflicts, but it is also a consequence of inadequate development and emergency interventions. Malnutrition and hunger such as in Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, or Libya are examples for complex emergencies, resulting from a combination of different causes. Center-periphery-approaches can hardly explain these situations.

5. *Financialization*: Financialization processes impact increasingly on the global food system (Gertel and Sippel). Three economic dynamics are important: (a) The development of a new regime of accumulation and the sectorial shifts of leading national economies from industrial to financial capital. (b) The increasing importance of shareholder-value, such as in food corporations, which now shape performance and value-orientation and thereby generate a new distribution of risks and wealth. (c) The financialization of everyday life, that is to say, the inclusion of low- and middle-class households into global financial markets through new financial products. An increasing number of ordinary people now speculate with agrarian resources are aided by institutional investors, such as pension fund managers (Schumann). Security and insecurity thus dovetail globally in new ways.

Retirement provisions "here" and food insecurity "there" (caused by speculation from institutional investors with agrarian resources, which leads to food price volatility) are entrenched (Gertel, "Dimension und Dynamik"). Clapp argues, that financialization results in a new mode of distanciation within the global food system. On the one hand, the number and types of actors of the commodity chains are increasing, while on the other hand, food is dismantled from its physical form and is instead represented in complex derivatives. This change constitutes a new challenge for any political opposition against financialization. MacKenzie reveals that particularly in high frequency trading, actors are no longer human individuals. Rather, actors are algorithms and even the market itself must be thought of as an algorithm. With the growing "technoliberalization" of trade with financial products (Gertel, "Krise und Widerstand"), temporality in the global food systems is thus shifting. This leads to new questions of causation and accountability when it comes to "sudden" price-dependent food crises ("Der Preis für Brot"). It is not the territorial, but rather the temporal differences that account for arbitrage profits. The notion of "realtime" loses its significance, as the informational advantage depends on milliseconds. These tempo-

ral differences are increasingly beyond human capabilities of reaction and intervention.

6. *Post-national spaces* of protest and intervention: Food protests have a long history.[4] Apart from local, and particularly, urban movements and territories of protest—as embodied by Tahrir in Cairo—international initiatives such as Occupy Wallstreet develop new spatialities (i.e. via web-mobilization) and are addressing not only national governments, but also the global financial system as a producer of insecurities. Interventions into the food system also exceed the national context and the role of the state. Actors in international development aid, for example, visually contribute to spatialized hunger through media images and also via a discursive representation of famine. The installation of a specific apparatus of logistics and rights can even undermine national sovereignty, at least temporarily, as the case of Operation Lifeline Sudan has shown. Increasingly, such forms of intervention face bottom up opposition. Consumers, as well as producers, who market their own products, form alliances in alternative agri-food movements. They challenge the current constitution of the global food system. This is corroborated by decentralized actors calling for boycotts, commitments to organic agriculture,

fair trade and slow food, as well as by initiatives in the global South, such as the Via-Campesina movement that is advocating food sovereignty. These practices shape new producer-consumer relations (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman) and also open up new institutional spaces of protest and intervention (cf. the FAO Committee on World Food Security that negotiates new legal principles of land ownership; McMichael, "Historizing Food Sovereignty"). These spaces of protest and intervention are shaped by a post-national institutional plurality and by new dynamics of virtual communication.

Conclusion

Increasingly, post-national spaces of food (in)security emerge. They are characterized by multi-scalar institutional configurations, by complex power relations and by fragmenting liabilities. In this sense, four formations and constellations of spaces can be distinguished. At times they unfold as temporal assemblages and at times they are more manifest as spatial fix. First, spaces of hunger: Places, where individuals and groups are recurrently and physically affected by food insecurity (here responsibility seems to be predominantly attributed to national governments, which should be questioned). Second, spaces of hunger causation: These are

predominantly chains of interactions and transactions that can span globally and that intentionally or unintentionally contribute—predominately via food price formation—to hunger and insecurity (here "distanciation" in Clapp's sense is high and liability is very low). Third and forth, spaces of protest and intervention: These appear in multiple forms where actors denounce food insecurity or try to mitigate their consequences and effects (here, responsibilities, such as corporate global responsibility or food sovereignty, are renegotiated but liabilities are still far away). As the composition of these forces and their spatial expression realign alongside financialization processes, the global food system is constantly changing. Currently, new interfaces of virtual and material spaces unfold while new polycentric and destabilizing orders of fixation and mobilization emerge. Polarizing concepts of the center and periphery invite one to think in static terms. For example, territorially determined nation-states assume that (national) boundaries of interaction are firmly fixed in time and space. To adequately describe and analyze globalizing food systems that are driven by financialization, concepts need to comprehend the forces of increasingly fragmented configurations of responsibility. In short, it is about the fractionation of

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social space: First, in the sense of dissolution in territorial configurations of action, second, as a new temporal configuration, in which non-human actors increasingly play a role, and finally, in regards to the performances of metrics and the reflexive effects of knowledge production that make us think and act.

Notes

[1] See the *filière*-approach: Raikes, Jensen, and Ponte.

[2] For Egypt see Gertel, *Globalisierte Nahrungskrisen*.

[3] For Egypt see Gertel, "Inscribed Bodies".

[4] For the Arab world see Walton and Seddon; Gertel, "Krise und Widerstand".

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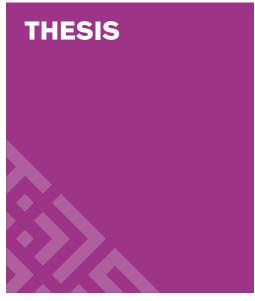Watts Michael J. "Capitalism, Crises and Cultures." *Reworking Modernity: Capitalism and Symbolic Discontent.* Ed. Allan Pred and Michael Watts. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992. Print.

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THESIS

Provincializing and Localizing Core-Periphery Relations

Cilja Harders

The paper engages with core-periphery conceptions because they are a useful *Denkfigur* in a time of increasing global interconnectedness. I argue that the core-periphery metaphor is a useful one because it provides us with a relational tool of analysis and at the same time with a focus on asymmetric power relations. But it also has some serious limitations, such as a tendency to be over-determin-istic and to be too global in scale. In order to address these limitations, I suggest rescaling Prebisch, Amin and Wallerstein's global conception of core and periphery to the local scale. I hold that we need to "provincialize" the core-periphery meta-phor, to borrow Chakrabarty's (2000) famous term, and to make the agency of local actors more relevant to our under-standing of political dynamics in the MENA region. This paper sketches how "provincialized" and "localized" ways of using the core-periphery metaphor could look. This part builds on the main ideas Malika Bouziane, Anja Hoffmann and I developed in the introduction to our volume *Local Politics and Contemporary Transformations in the Arab World*, as well as my approach of a "state analysis from below."

Keywords: Core-Periphery; Agency-Struc-ture; Politics Beyond the Center; Arab Transformations

The main reason for me to engage with core-periphery conceptions is the need to link issues of structure and agency in a time of increasing global interconnected-ness. The core-periphery metaphor is a useful one because it provides us (1) with a relational tool of analysis and (2) with a focus on asymmetric power relations. However, this tool has some serious limita-tions, such as a tendency to be over-deterministic and to be too global in scale. In order to address these limitations, I suggest rescaling Prebisch, Amin and Wallerstein's global conception of core and periphery to the local scale. I hold that we need to "provincialize" the core periphery metaphor, to borrow Chakrabarty's (2000) famous term, and to make the agency of local actors more rel-evant to our understanding of political dynamics in the Maghreb, Mashriq and Gulf[1] region. I offer my approach of a "state analysis from below" as a way of linking structure and agency on the national and local scale. In the last paragraphs of this essay, I will briefly sketch how "provincial-ized" and "localized" ways of using the core-periphery metaphor could look. This part builds on the main ideas Malika Bouziane, Anja Hoffmann and I developed in more detail in the introduction to our volume *Local Politics and Contemporary Transformations in the Arab World*.

Relationality and Asymmetries: Why the Core-Periphery Metaphor Is Useful

The idea of core-periphery relations as relations of economic and political domination was first used by the Economic Commission of Latin America and Raúl Prebisch in the 1950s to denote a specific, uneven division of labor in the world-economy between the North, the former imperial and colonial forces, and the South, the colonized peoples and economies. This idea was picked up, criticized and refined by different strands of dependency theories, which hold that this inequality is a necessary result and precondition of world capitalism. Amin, Wallerstein and others used it as an integral part of what Wallerstein later called world-systems analysis (*Modern World-System I*, *World-Systems Analysis*). Wallerstein argues that socioeconomic, political and historical developments should be analyzed in a relational way on a global rather than national level. He holds that so far in human history, there have been three kinds of systems: mini-systems, world-empires, and world-economies. The contemporary world-system is a capitalist world-economy.

Building on Prebisch, Wallerstein uses core-periphery in the sense that it denotes periphery-like and core-like production processes rather than countries, but it can be used as shorthand for states as well. Wallerstein proposes that "the key element distinguishing core-like from peripheral processes is the degree to which they are monopolized and therefore profitable" (*World-Systems Analysis* 93). Thus, as a result, periphery encompasses marginalized, less developed, economically less productive spaces or zones, which are dominated by a core, which is extracting surplus in an unequal exchange. His definition already hints to the two very productive aspects of his conceptualization: the relationality of the concept and the focus on power and domination. I will discuss these in light of some of the important insights of feminist theorizing of gender relations and power in order to assess the benefits and the limits of the concept.

(1) Relationality is a very useful *Denkfigur*. Relationality is not loaded normatively, as interactions of all types can be non-hierarchical as well as asymmetric and include material and non-material dimensions. For example, feminist reflections on concepts such as "femininity" or "masculinity" show that these can only be grasped in a relational manner. Our understanding of "man" is always linked to corresponding understandings of what "woman" is. This essential link is also inherent in the core-periphery metaphor. The center is materially and symbolically constituted through the existence of a periphery and vice versa.

In feminist theorizing, such an understanding of relationality also implies that gender relations are not unidirectional relations of simple and violent domination. Rather, intersectional approaches in feminist theory as developed, for example, by Crenshaw, teach us that relations of power can take many different shapes along the lines of class, race, gender, disability or sexual orientation. An actor's positionality might change accordingly, depending on her different material and non-material resources in a given field, to borrow from Bourdieu (*Distinction*). Thus, gender relations are constituted both by structures and processes: people do gender and gender is being done. I suggest that the same can be said for core-periphery relations: they are as much determined by economic and political structures as they are shaped by individual and collective actors and their practices. This also implies that power is more than the capacity to dominate. It is rather a ubiquitous and productive force in the Foucauldian (*Discipline and Punish*) sense. It links discursive, symbolic and material spaces. Core-periphery relations in such a sense, then, are manifold, and their dynamics cannot just be understood as a function of

economic dominance. This in turn involves the need to make agency more relevant to the argument. In order to do so, I suggest analyzing the intersections of global structures and local actors on a national scale using "state analysis from below" rather than "world-systems analysis."

(2) In the world-systems analysis, asymmetric power relations are at the heart of core-periphery relations on a global scale. They are part of the current capitalist world-economy, which emerged in the 16th century after a prolonged crisis of feudalism in Europe. Through these socioeconomic transformations, different countries of a core, a semi-periphery and a periphery emerged. The European core historically built its political and economic dominance on the exploitation of the periphery by extracting resources and raw material, thus creating surplus. This surplus is then turned into economies of high productivity creating wealth. In between these two lies the semi-periphery which includes economies and states which display some characteristics of the center and the periphery alike. "… [T]hey trade core-like products to peripheral zones and peripheral products to core zones" (Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis* 97). Even though this conceptualization might sound overly simplistic and static,

it still captures structures of global inequality very well. A United Nations report from 2013 states:

In 2010, high-income countries—that accounted for only 16 per cent of the world's population—were estimated to generate 55 per cent of global income. Low-income countries created just above one per cent of global income even though they contained 72 per cent of global population. An average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of $2,014 in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 stood out against regional GDPs per capita of $27,640 in the European Union and $41,399 in North America. (United Nations 25)

But of course, such statements need intersectional differentiation, as I explained above. They need to be provincialized and discussed on more than one scale. Thus we get a more nuanced picture along the lines of gender, class, race, religion, and sexual orientation. The latest *World Development Report* shows that women represent 40 percent of the world's labor force but hold just 1 percent of the world's wealth (World Bank 46). Wage gaps persist: salaried women workers earn 62 cents for every US$1 that men earn in Germany, 64 cents in India and about 80 cents in Mexico and Egypt. Women and girls are more likely to die

relative to men and boys in low and middle-income countries, with 3.9 million "missing" women and girls each year under the age of 60, the report says (xxi). In education, women now account for more than half of the world's university students, and 60 countries have more young women than men in universities. Primary education disparities between boys and girls have closed in almost all nations. And in secondary education, girls now outnumber boys in 45 developing countries. But ethnicity combined with poverty can be a barrier: two-thirds of out-of-school girls around the world belong to ethnic minority groups (xx). The political implications of these global structures of inequality are far reaching, according to Wallerstein (*Modern World-System I*). The economies of the core led to wealth and thus to the establishment of strong welfare states which tend to live in peace whith each other. The states of the periphery, on the other hand, are weak, as they lack the resources to manage internal conflicts over access to these resources. The states of the semi-periphery function as a buffer zone between the core and the rest. They are mostly authoritarian states, as their economies are not fully productive and the state structure is weak. Wallerstein holds that this is not a static system, as states might rise and fall.

Thus, the core-periphery metaphor helps to situate states on the political and economic map of the world.

Still, I argue—much in line with earlier criticisms—that these generalizations need specification. A brief look at structuralist and functionalist arguments engaged with explaining the Arab uprisings will add some evidence to my claim. For example, all countries that have seen sustained mass mobilisation (Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Syria) in 2011 are peripheral countries in view of world-systems theory. A closer look at the economic performance shows significant differences, though, such as between Yemen, Libya and Bahrain concerning (oil) wealth. In all states, poverty and social inequality can be found, Libya being the outlier. Nevertheless, a peripheral position, poverty and exclusion do not automatically induce protest, and vice versa. Thus, Yemen, Egypt and Tunisia have very little in common regarding basic indicators such as GDP, degree of literacy and overall productivity, but they could all shake free from their authoritarian rulers in 2011. Since then, these countries have embarked on quite different trajectories, which are of course influenced by structural factors. But I hold that these developments are linked to local dynamics of political contestation in

relation to structural factors such as regime type, resource endowment, or position as peripheral state. This in turn implies that actors and their actions, resources and beliefs are at the core of these local dynamics. Not the least, actions have an impact on actors and the ensuing processes of contestation, thus creating a degree of open-endedness and arbitrariness in the process itself.

The same is true for geopolitical dynamics, which are part and parcel of the core-periphery approach. Even though of course global power relations are heavily asymmetric, in the framework of globalization, they underwent some structural change well before the Arab uprisings and can thus not be used in order to explain large-scale political unrest in 2011. Power has shifted in three directions: upward, downward, and sideward, as Jessop noted already in 2000 (75). For the states of the Maghreb, Mashriq and Gulf as elsewhere, this means it shifted to transnational actors, non-state actors, and non-Arab actors already since 2003 due to the Iraq war (Harders and Bank 411-12). These processes have been exacerbated in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings. The violent re-negotiation of the regional order includes the emergence of new social actors and transnational networks and the growing sideward shift of political power,

influence, and authority away from the Mediterranean coastline toward the Persian Gulf. These shifts have a significant impact on the violent conflicts in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Still, the ensuing dynamics are quite varied: in Syria, any internationally negotiated solution is locked into a classic interstate cold-war scenario between Russia/China and Western powers. The intensive involvement of regional and international actors in sponsoring local armed groups with transnational links both to the West, (Gulf) Arab states, Turkey and Iran further complicates the picture and is at the same time indicative of sideward power shifts. The rise of a translocal non-state military actor such as ISIS since 2014 epitomizes these ongoing downward shifts. This is reinforced by the fact that ISIS is explicitly not interested in stabilizing the existing nation-states but rather in creating new sovereign structures with quite different shapes, thus challenging the model and practice of the conventional Middle Eastern nation-state. In Yemen in 2015, a Saudi-led alliance is imposing air strikes on the country in order to fight Shia Houthi militias. The Houthi militias in turn had been involved in violently challenging the regime long before 2011 and in the course of the conflict became increasingly transnationalized through the involvement of regional

actors such as Iran. Libya's disintegration, in contrast, ceased to attract much interest from regional and international state actors except European activities to control migration movements across the Mediterranean. Again, the effects of global power asymmetries, I hold, can only fully be grasped in *relation* to *local* agency and dynamics of contestation.

Alternative Perspectives on Core-Periphery Relations

What could such "provincialized" and "localized" ways of using the core-periphery metaphor look like? Provincialization implies more specificity in understanding how state-society relations play out on and among different scales such as the local, national, regional or international. Rather than assuming that these all work more or less in the same way in peripheral states, we need to theorize (1) the complex interplay between agency and structure more systematically and (2) link this to a deeper reflection on the "local." In order to theorize state-society relations, then, I use the analytical framework of a "state analysis from below," which I developed elsewhere in more detail (*Staatsanalyse*, "Bringing the Local"). In order to understand "the local" better, I build on the collaborative intellectual efforts Malika Bouziane, Anja Hoffmann and I made in

the framework of a research project in the SFB 700 "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood" and the book *Local Politics and Contemporary Transformations in the Arab World: Governance Beyond the Centre* that was published as a result.

What is "state analysis from below"? It is an analytical framework which draws on critical, feminist, constructionist, and ethnographic works as sources of inspiration. It is embedded in the qualitative paradigm and builds on critical feminist methodologies. The approach is grounded in social theory, as it looks at the material and non-material dimensions of power relations and the ways these are both narrated and practiced. More specifically, in my 2002 book I built on Bourdieu's conceptualization of agency and structure in order to understand how actors use their different social, cultural, and symbolic capital while, for example, acting in the political field (Bourdieu, *Distinction*, *Über den Staat*). The approach thus contributes to the understanding of state-society relations in the broadest sense while looking at micro dynamics on the local scale, thus inscribing itself thoroughly in theory-oriented critical area studies. It offers a specific research perspective on "the state" as heuristic object of inquiry, which is understood by looking at local political dynamics, institutions and actors. The approach

of a "state analysis from below" focuses on political dynamics rather than (regime) stability.[2] It stresses the agency of actors, their resources, interests and belief systems within the given material and non-material structures, which enable or hinder certain actions. I thus focus on the dynamic and contradictory relations between "the state" and "society" rather than on the formal institutions and organizations, national arenas and political elites. Rather than assuming that "the state" or its agents deliver public services and contribute to the welfare, security, and inclusion of citizens, as a more mainstream political science definition of state and state functions would imply, I start from the local practices of an "everyday state" with limited hegemony. The state, then, is taken to be a translocal institution and a space of contestation and power struggles structured by a social contract. These struggles are embedded in specific historical, symbolic-discursive, social, institutional, cultural, and economic contexts. They constitute "politics," understood here in a broad sense, which become visible on the local scale and can empirically be operationalized as different types of participation.

The main link between these structures and individual and/or collective agency in this approach is the concept of a "social contract," which defines the "rules of the

game." These rules are geared towards the creation of legitimacy for the current state of affairs while at the same time materially securing authoritarian rule. For example, the Egyptian social contract is authoritarian and informal in nature; citizens basically swap political rights for development and economic welfare (Harders, *Staatsanalyse*; Büttner and Büttner). The social contract is based on certain "logics of action," which structure the belief systems and expectations of different actors. Such logics of action in turn deeply influence the political structures, institutions and core beliefs of major actors, as Horst, Jünemann and Rothe argue in their "Logics of Action approach" (LoA). Empirically, it can be traced through, for example, looking at the belief systems of actors. In the Egyptian case, I argued that before (and even after) 2011 five logics of action dominated for elite actors: limited political liberalization, limited economic liberalization, Islamization, informalization and repression.

The social contract of informality came under growing pressure in the last ten to fifteen years due to different developments such as neoliberal reforms, demographic change, media innovations (satellite-TV and the Internet) and changing gender relations. Thus, increasingly dynamic societies were confronted with increasingly ossified authoritarian regime elites clinging to their power. Rapid social change was not met with political openings, leading to "transformation without transition." This in turn enabled people to increasingly challenge social contracts, leading to a protracted crisis of legitimacy in the Arab region. In this view, the wave of mass protest, which happened in 2011 in the Arab world, was basically triggered by a crisis of legitimacy, and the ensuing power struggles can be understood as the oftentimes violent attempts to re-negotiate the social contracts. At the same time, structures and actors interact and are co-determined: the dynamics of mass protest, revolution and their aftermath are the product of logics of action of contentious agents. Their actions have an impact on existing structures and vice versa. Such a relational perspective is explicit in the world-systems analysis but on a rather global scale. I hold that this can be and should be re-scaled to the local level, as the local is both the testing ground and a contested ground for new developments (Harders, "Bringing the Local").

What does this mean and how can the local be conceptualized both as a research perspective and object of inquiry? In the introduction to our volume *Contemporary Transformations in the Arab World: Governance Beyond the Centre*, Malika Bouziane, Anja Hoffmann and I argue that most prominently, the Arab uprisings of 2011

> have demonstrated that "so-called peripheral" spaces and seemingly marginal actors have been vital in triggering major changes on the regime level; challenges to authoritarian governance are often first visible and viable in these local spaces of both resistance and acquiescence. It is on the local scale that power relations become tangible and abstract concepts such as "state" and "politics" observable. ("Analyzing Politics" 3)

Thus, looking at the micro-dynamics of struggles for power over material and non-material resources offers a more complex picture of authoritarian rule in the (semi-) periphery than much of the functionalist literature has it. These struggles are "simultaneously localized and globalized, connected to different scales and timeframes" (3). We avoid core-periphery language and instead speak about dynamics "beyond the center" in order to make space for the idea that there is more than one center and that these centers are the contested product of continuous social struggles. Picking up on the idea that there are structural and systematic differences between the cen-

ter and the rest, we also look at the discursive level of these differences.

> While economic distance from the center might be measured by citizens' access to infrastructure and welfare, it is difficult to quantify people's self-perception of being socially or politically marginalized. Nevertheless, the spaces discussed here are characterized by a certain distance from the center with regard to power, practices of sovereignty, logics of violence, and allocation of resources. (6)

Spaces beyond the center, we hold, are often framed as being meaningless and inferior. These discourses mirror the existing sociopolitical order, and they are met by both resistance and subordination. As Bouziane shows in her work on the Jordanian town of Ma'an, its inhabitants interpret central politics as being dominated by the idea that the town needs control and punishment due to its unruly history. Morocco's mid-Atlas town of Luant is regarded as part of the so-called "useless Morocco," as Hoffmann shows in her work. This terminology is intentionally used by actors in the socioeconomic and political center of Morocco to demarcate scales and places of power/powerlessness. Such an epistemological move is highly productive in the sense that it creates the "useless Morocco" it presumes to describe,

and at the same time it is met by very concrete local opposition (Hoffmann). In the same vein, Lenner, in her study on Jordan, critically engages with the politics of constructing "poverty pockets," the dominant narrative used in Jordanian development politics. She shows how "poverty pockets" are defined and chosen in an assemblage of national and local actors' strategies imbued by international donors' priorities as much as by the government's need to include or appease specific communities. She links the global with the national scale without assuming patterns of domination but rather looking at the ways in which dominant international narratives are translated to the Jordanian context. Through the use of indicators, Lenner argues, poverty alleviation politics are "rendered technical." Thus, much energy is invested in debates about the "right" poverty line rather than addressing issues of inequality and distribution of wealth and access to resources.

These studies draw on critical debates inspired by the "cultural turn" in social sciences, which engages with the power and productivity of language and discourse. This has serious methodological implications. In her famous essay about "situated knowledges," feminist thinker Donna Haraway engages with the methodological dilemmas which emerge from femi-

nists' and radical constructionists' criticism of conventional, positivist science. She criticizes the idea of a neutral, godlike scientific gaze on the world from nowhere and argues for "the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (589) as a basic prerequisite to create "situated knowledges" rather than seemingly "objective" science.

Taking these methodological reflections as a starting point, we also struggled with the politics of naming. By using the term "beyond the center" we both link up to and disconnect from the center-periphery metaphor. Why? Thinking in dichotomic categories tends to be reductionist, as it presupposes that there are only two sides or spaces to look at. We hold that there is more beyond the core than just periphery in the classic sense, and in this essay I have presented a complex matrix of scales and actors which cannot be caught in a simple dichotomy. Thus, in our book we speak about the so-called "periphery" in order to leave space for the emergence of perceptions which go beyond a simple relationship of domination. By not naming the periphery as such, we stress the role of agency in politics as we understand it. This allows us to better account for local narratives and perceptions of the multiple

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power dynamics embedded in center-periphery relations.

But, by way of auto-critique of our conceptualization, I would like to hint at the limits of this suggestion. If what is "beyond the center" is not named, we repeat an exclusionary epistemological gesture of withholding even a name or a signifier for the periphery. Only the center is named as "center;" the periphery is just delineated to be everything "beyond the center." Such a move reifies the centrality and power of the center on the discursive level. So, both options come with limitations. The core-periphery concept is heavily loaded in a deterministic and economistic way, but the idea of just naming the center as such and leaving the rest "beyond" is just as problematic. The same is true of the "from below" metaphor I have been using. Even though it stresses the periphery rather than the center in directing our gaze to "below," it also reproduces the vertical hierarchies of being on top or being below. The metaphor implies that messy realities can be sorted in such an orderly way. This is, as I already alluded to, not just a scientific illusion but a powerful and highly productive gesture, which serves to render this messiness understandable and thus controllable. Not the least, it also inscribes itself in an emancipatory intellectual trajectory—

such as a feminist or Marxist one—which has also produced highly problematic and romanticized accounts of "giving voice to the suppressed" or being in possession of a not-so-false consciousness. As Donna Haraway puts it:

So, I think my problem, and "our" problem, is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meaning, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited silliness. (579)

Her answer to this problem is "situated knowledges" and a different type of science. She concludes:

Science becomes the paradigmatic model, not of closure, but of that which is contestable and contested. Science becomes the myth, not of what escapes human agency and responsibility in a realm above the fray, but, rather, of accountability and responsibility for translations and solidarities linking the cacophonous visions and visionary voices that characterize the

knowledges of the subjugated. (590)

It is in this sense that I proposed to use the core-periphery metaphor while building on research which has been produced by the team of the Center for Politics in the Maghreb, Mashriq and Gulf at FU Berlin in recent years (Center for Middle Eastern and North African Politics). In light of these conceptual debates and empirical findings, I argued that in order to strengthen the analytical use of the core-periphery concept, it needs to be provincialized and localized. This can be done by, for example, using my approach of a "state analysis from below" or by looking at "governance beyond the center." This enables us to imbue our analysis of core-periphery relations with a better understanding of the role of agency, resistance and the multi-scalar power struggles which link the many different cores with the quite variegated peripheries.

Notes

1   I use different terms such as Arab world, Middle East and North Africa, Maghreb, Mashriq and Gulf in order to demarcate "the region," which is both a political construct and a political reality. As all terms carry serious limitations, e.g. with regard to their colonial roots and geopolitical implications, I use them intermittently.

2   The following paragraph is based on Harders, "Bringing the Local Back In."

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FOCUS

"Spaces in the Making:" Peripheralization and Spatial Injustice in Southern Yemen

Anne-Linda Amira Augustin

By using the concept of peripheralization as defined by Fischer-Tahir and Naumann (2013), I examine how processes of change in economy, demography, political decision-making, and socio-cultural norms and values have marginalized Southern Yemen after 1990, and especially after the war of 1994. I will argue that politically produced spatial injustice has strengthened the desire for Southern Yemeni independence.

Keywords: Peripheralization; Spatial Injustice; Southern Movement; Southern Yemen

Introduction

When the protests of the Southern Movement (*al-Hirak al-Janubi*) started in 2007, activists called for solutions to the precarious socio-economic situation in the country and for an end to the marginalization of southern Yemenis in the centralized state after unity. After Yemeni state security forces reacted with violence, the social movement seeking economic integration transformed into an umbrella movement of various groups, organizations and NGOs with a concrete political objective, that of state independence of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). During the so-called Arab Spring, the Southern Movement perceived new opportunities for mobilization against (northern) "Yemeni Occupation," as relations between north and south are often described in the southern political discourse.

Drawing near Fischer-Tahir and Naumann (2013), I examine the factors contributing to peripheralization (change in economy, demography, political decision-making, and socio-cultural norms and values) and how they have marginalized Southern Yemen after 1990, and especially after the war of 1994. These selected examples are the very often discussed themes in political discourses of Southern Movement activists that encourage political mobili-

zation in the south. Furthermore, some of the cases had enormous relevance on a national scale and were therefore discussed within the National Dialogue Conference.[1] I will argue that politically produced spatial injustice (Soja, "Seeking") as the result of unequitable distribution of resources and opportunities has strengthened the desire for Southern Yemeni independence.

In taking a critical geography perspective, I will show how spaces are socially produced on different scales. This article[2] is based on field work in Aden, Abyan and Radfan (in the Lahij governorate), and a series of interviews with grassroots actors of the Southern Movement between March and May 2014 and in early 2015.[3]

Peripheralization in Yemen's South and the Emergence of the Southern Movement

This section contributes to an understanding of the emergence of the Southern Movement in 2007 by showing that its development is connected to processes of peripheralization of Southern Yemen that predominantly began after the war in 1994.

The term "peripheralization" describes the process of becoming disconnected from, and dependent on, centers. In this sense, a *periphery* is "the outcome of complex processes of change in the economy, demography, political decision-making and socio-cultural norms and values" (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 9). Peripheralization refers to a spatially organized inequality of power relations and access to material and symbolic goods that construct and perpetuate the precedence of centers over areas that are marginalized (18). High levels of poverty associated with political and economic dependence on centers or other regions, decline or disconnection with respect to infrastructural networks and services, marginalization and stigmatization, as well as loss of opportunities and life chances articulate peripheralization (21). All of these dimensions are expressions of social injustice, produced and perpetuated by structures that uphold the unequal distribution of power and inequitable access for some segments of society to economic and political decision-making bodies on a local, regional, national, supra-national, or global scale (22). In the following, I will analyze—based on selected examples—processes of change that lead to peripheralization of Southern Yemen and that show expressions of "spatial injustice" (Soja, "Seeking"). Spatial (in)justice refers to an intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial aspects of justice and injustice. It involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them.

Processes of Change in the Economy

The discovery of oil in Hadhramaut and Marib was an influential factor in calls for Yemeni unity in the late 1980s. Oil had been found in the south in 1982 (Dresch 161), but oil production in the southern region started on a commercial scale only after Yemeni unity in 1990 and has since been the driving force of Yemen's economy. Approximately 80 percent of Yemen's oil fields are situated in the southern governorate of Hadhramaut (EIA). However, according to Bafana, the local residents have had no benefits in the form of the economic development of their region and, conversely, have suffered from polluted ground water due to contamination from oil production. Southern oil has been exploited by the regime in Sanaa to the benefit of the patronage networks and associates of leading figures in that regime. As a result, and following the killing of the influential tribal Sheikh Saad bin Habrish al-Hamumi by a Yemeni soldier in late 2013, the Hadhrami Tribal Alliance mounted a limited insurgency against the Yemeni regime, its supporters in the region, and the army, claiming that they had all profited from Hadhrami oil revenues for many years at the expense of

local people. This was accompanied by pressure on Yemeni and international oil companies in the region demanding that they employ more Hadhramis and offer supply and service contracts to local companies. The Hadhrami Tribal Alliance also demanded that all security services for oil companies operating in the region should be provided by Hadhramis and demanded the withdrawal of the army (Bafana). When the government did not comply with these demands, there was an escalation of violence reaching the level of uprising.

Geographically uneven "development"[4] and "underdevelopment" provide a frame of reference for understanding the processes that produce injustices (Soja, "The City" 3). This is well exemplified by the Port of Aden. In the 1950s it was the second busiest harbor in the world after New York. As a British colonial port, Aden was conceived by the British as a central point for trade between Europe and Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa. Six months before the independence of South Yemen in 1967, the port's activity decreased by 75 percent when the Suez Canal was closed during the Six Day Arab-Israeli War and it did not reopen until 1975 (Halliday 239). In 1990, the Aden Container Terminal and the Aden Free Trade Zone were established to attract international investment. In 2008, Dubai Ports World took over man-

agement of the Port of Aden. However, its ambitious aims to develop the economic growth of the port were never achieved, not least because Dubai Ports World did not keep its investment promises. Many in Aden perceived the contract as a bargain basement sale that only served the international strategy of Dubai Ports World. At the end of September 2012, the Yemeni government terminated the contract (Augustin). Despite being one of the biggest natural harbors of the world, Aden operates well below its potential due to inaction in Sanaa on essential structural reforms, establishing effective legal protection and developing infrastructure to adapt to changes in shipping requirements. Added to this is the piracy and lack of security in the Horn of Africa. Terrorist attacks such as the one on the USS Cole in 2000 led to an increase in insurance premiums and deterred shipping companies from using Aden. More recently, the terrorism of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has exacerbated the problem: for several months in 2011 and 2012, *Ansar al-Sharia*, an AQAP offshoot, set up an Islamic Emirate in the governorate of Abyan, a mere fifty kilometers east of Aden.[5] As a result, and due to competition from ports such as Dubai, Salalah and Djibouti, Aden has lost its former significant position as a crucial harbor city and will

struggle to restore it given that, due to its significant geographical position, it became the main battleground of the 2015 war in Yemen.[6]

Processes of Change in the Demography
At the time of Yemeni unity in 1990, there was an enormous population imbalance between northern and southern regions. Though the two regimes agreed to share power equally during a transition period, southerners represented only approximately one quarter of the entire population of the country. This imbalance reinforced peripheralization of the south and came into political relevance in the 1993 elections. Despite the fact that the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) came in first by landslide in Southern Yemen, it only finished third behind President Ali Abdullah Salih's General People's Congress (GPC) and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah) (Al-Bab). These election results helped precipitate the crisis between the northern and southern leaderships that led to the 1994 war, in which northern forces with the support of southern allies defeated the remnants of the PDRY armed forces.

In April 2014, southern Facebook groups headlined the news that in Abyan, northerners tried to obtain locally issued passports and identity cards (Alomanaa). The news presented it as an attempt to change

the demographic composition in the south prior to the holding of the referendum on the planned new constitution that ultimately—due to the war—did not take place. There are doubts as to whether this actually happened and, indeed, if it happened, whether a change of population composition was its aim. The demographic imbalance between northern and southern Yemen stokes fears that go back to the trauma of the 1993 elections, when the YSP lost its position as leading party. This story shows that anxieties of "occupation" and of marginalization are profoundly ingrained in southern Yemeni memories and discourses.

Processes of Change in Political Decision-Making

Concerning southern Yemen, processes of change in political decision-making are the most profound reasons why Southern Yemen became peripheralized after unity. Thus, this section is the longest, although I selected only some examples. Despite the analytical value of Fischer-Tahir and Naumann's conceptualization, 'political decision making' is not clearly defined. I therefore suggest that processes of change in political decision-making refer to large-scale institutionalized discrimination of southerners by Sanaa-ruled state bodies and institutions. After the 1994

war, the institutionalized marginalization of southerners increased and became a source of spatial injustice. After its defeat over the south in 1994, the Sanaa regime decided to force most of military officers and soldiers as well as many civil servants from the south into retirement. Many of these southerners did not receive the appropriate pension;[7] they and their children became the basis of the Southern Movement in 2007. In 2013, Yemen established a $1.2 billion fund to compensate southern state employees and soldiers for their financial losses after their retirement or dismissal following the 1994 war (Ghobari). This followed acceptance by the government—highlighted by discussions within the NDC—that southerners had justifiable grievances that had to be addressed. The compensation fund was only a partial, short-term response but was nevertheless important, even though it does not solve the deep economic problems of Yemen, which need long-term solutions and radical reform. By 2014, it seemed nearly impossible to solve all of the socio-economic problems in the poorest country of the Arab world. As noted above, the "southern cause"[8] up to 2007 was essentially one of economic marginalization. According to an economist of Aden University, the Southern Movement would not exist today had the

state reacted immediately in 2007 with measures to reintegrate into the army and civil service the southerners who had been forced to retire after the 1994 war (University scholar, personal conversation). This locational discrimination is essential in the production of spatial injustice and the creation of lasting spatial structures of privilege and advantage (Soja, "The City" 3). Furthermore, institutionalized marginalization took place at governorate levels, where senior positions were awarded to northerners. Southerners had less access, in general, to jobs than northerners, because during and after 1994, the army of the Sanaa regime looted and closed down most southern public sector companies and factories,[9] thus increasing unemployment (Dahlgren, "Southern Movement" 50). Even today businessmen complain that an investor who wants to establish a business or a factory in Southern Yemen faces more difficulties than he or she would find in the north. According to an influential Abyani, inducements have to be paid to government officials or a partnership has to be offered to influential northern businessmen (Influential Abyani, personal conversation).

The political formation of space is a notably powerful source of spatial injustice (Soja, "The City" 3), which is observable in

the concentration of political decision-making in Sanaa and which, for example, occurs in the educational sector. Before unity, many southerners had obtained scholarships from the PDRY government to study abroad; after unity, scholarships were limited (Dahlgren, "Southern Movement" 51) and southerners found that it was very difficult to access them. They surmised that this was largely because northern elites corrupted the process. The same applied to civil service positions, including teachers. Teaching positions in today's Yemen are principally obtained through an intermediary in Sanaa, who may want a bribe. Most young people wait for years after their university graduation to get jobs as civil servants, and the private sector is too weak to absorb them in a country where youth unemployment exceeds 50 percent.

One of the most hotly debated issues concerns land grievances in Southern Yemen. Problems of land ownership rights emerged after unity in 1990 and caused a great deal of conflict which is still ongoing today. The PDRY, following the takeover of power by the left wing of the National Liberation Front in the "Glorious Corrective Move" of 1969, issued laws that dispossessed influential families and former sultans and benefited small holders and landless households. After 1990, much

nationalized land was returned to previous owners or people pretending to be so. In addition, new decrees and investment regulations reorganized land ownership. The 1991 "September Directive" facilitated the distribution of state land, but in some cases different government departments, such as the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the General Investment Authority, distributed the same land plots to different people. Furthermore, these ministries and the regime distributed much land in the southern areas to supporters of the Sanaa regime, state employees, army officers, and civil servants (Pritzkat 66-67).[10]

The before-mentioned Abyan War in 2011-2012 destroyed much of the governorate's capital Zinjibar and its surrounding areas. Grievances in Abyan were further exacerbated by a slow and inadequate government program to repair the damages to Zinjibar and other areas and to relieve the plight of the people. The Yemeni government promised to pay the refugees to help them rebuild their houses. However, according to a refugee from Zinjibar, some of the engineers responsible for assessing the damages to houses and calculating the amount of money that was to be paid to affected households demanded bribes to record the actual, or higher, costs of reconstruction for the houses on their lists

(Zinjibar refugee, personal conversation). The government payments were to be made in three instalments. People received the first instalment but are still waiting for the second and third instalments. Given their bad living conditions, on April 15, 2014, angry Abyanis blocked the road between Zinjibar and Aden to protest and demonstrate their resentment at the delay and the procedures used (Al-Shair).

Processes of Change in Socio-Cultural Norms and Values
According to its socialist principles, the PDRY government implemented a number of social policies and provided a range of services to the population that became part of the daily life of PDRY citizens. At unity in 1990, the PDRY and Arab Republic of Yemen (YAR) had different levels of development with respect to their education and health care systems, as well as on subsidies for food, jobs and housing. The socialist southern state had tried to abolish tribalism, but after unity, the Sanaa regime encouraged tribalism fostered by the return of some of the previous ruling families of the pre-PDRY sultanates. In the PDRY, the influence of religion was restricted: it was not a matter for the state but for private individuals. Particularly after the 1994 war, southerners started to dis-

cover and experience conservative Islam (Dahlgren, "Contesting Realities"). This notably manifested itself through the wearing of full veils and abayas for women and long beards for men. Sheikh ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani and his followers partly induced this change by asserting that southerners were infidels.[11] People were afraid of being molested in the streets, attacked, or even killed; the murder of at least 150 socialists between 1990 and 1993 was probably the work of religious extremists (Brehony 188). Al-Zindani travelled to Southern Yemen after unity to spread his ideas among the youth in Friday prayers. Young people were especially open to advice on the nature of the right path at a time of huge social transformations in the south. Changes in lifestyle took place: in 1994 Islamists demolished the Aden brewery. By contrast, the government did not maintain the PDRY restrictions on qat consumption (it was allowed only on weekends in Aden), and as qat became available on a daily basis, its use spread to parts of the south where it had previously not been used. The progressive Family Law of the PDRY was replaced by the YAR's conservative law right after unity, and women's rights were also rigorously restricted (Dahlgren, "Contesting Realities"). The Ministry of Education abolished school subjects such as

music, sports and arts, and the two subjects of Qurʾanic and Islamic studies replaced the subject religious studies. After the war, the ministry abolished mixed-sex schools as well. Furthermore, cinemas and theaters closed, as the state no longer subsidized cultural activities (Al-Khatib).
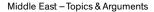
The "southern cause" is an identity issue in addition to being a socio-economic and political one. With the emergence of the Southern Movement, the conception of the "South Arabian identity" became a basic discursive means to claim independence. Among activists of the Southern Movement, the term "Yemeni" nowadays is only used with reference to northern Yemenis and is equated with backwardness and conservative thinking (Rogler 28). "South Arabian identity" is based on the representations of the past and experiences made during the period of British rule when it was commonly known as South Arabia. Narratives from the PDRY, for example, emphasize southerners' ability to create a civil state. The socialists of the PDRY tried to rid the country of its colonial heritage by introducing the term "Yemen" into the state's appellation, which activists of the Southern Movement reject today. The pan-Arab nationalism of the 20th century is for many, especially young southerners, an outdated morass of con-

ceptions and ideas that brought the south to the present-day situation, in which southerners' right to self-determination is ignored, as they are considered southern "Yemenis." It is in this context that southerners go back to the appellation of "South Arabia." This identity construction is predicated on the perception of being "occupied" by the north since the lost war of 1994. According to activists, it is the experience of large-scale marginalization after 1994, including spatial injustice, and the widespread perception in the south that the state is absent, as state structures and institutions are inactive, passive and ineffective, which promote the will for a return to independence (Southern Movement activists, interviews).

Conclusion

Referring to Fischer-Tahir and Naumann, the developments in Aden and in the entire south designate the process of becoming disconnected from and dependent on centers, as seen in changes in economy, demography, political decision-making, and last but not least, in processes of change in socio-cultural norms and values. High levels of poverty, decline of infrastructural networks and services, marginalization and stigmatization of southerners, as well as loss of life opportunities and insecurity

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are part of the daily life of most southerners and have thus contributed to the emergence and consolidation of the Southern Movement in Yemen. All of these dimensions express spatial injustice, produced by structures of unequal power distribution and inequitable access for most southerners to economic and political decision-making bodies on various scales.

Notes

[1] The NDC resulted from the Gulf Cooperation Council's Initiative that initiated the transitional processes in Yemen in late 2011. The NDC started on March 18, 2013 and ended in January 2014. The principal stakeholders of the Southern Movement rejected their participation in the NDC, because the Sanaa regime under President Hadi and the international community excluded the right for self-determination of southerners before the talks began.

[2] I discussed parts of this paper during the workshop "The Future of Yemen: Between Fragility and Freedom" of the *German Orient Institute* in December 2013 and during the workshop "Future of Yemen" at the *Gulf Research Meeting* in Cambridge in August 2014.

[3] Other than open structured and narrative interviews with Southern Movement activists of various ages originating from all southern Yemeni governorates, I undertook participant observations during their demonstrations, lectures, as well as during private meetings. These observed demonstrations and lectures took part in Aden's quarters of Crater, Tawahi, Qalluʾa, al-Muʾalla, Khor Maksar and al-Mansura.

[4] In *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (1984), Neil Smith conceptualizes the production of spatial and temporal unevenness. He calls "uneven development […] the concrete manifestation of the production of space under capitalism" (90). Uneven development results from the investment of capital in the built environments in certain areas, while investment in other areas remains absent.

[5] *Ansar al-Sharia*–a group linked to AQAP–took over the city of Jaar in Abyan for close to a year in 2011-2012 following the withdrawal of security forces to the north as a result of the confrontation between President Salih on the one hand and Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar (Salih's former senior Yemeni military commander and close associate who, on March 18, 2011, declared his opposition to him) and the al-Ahmar faction (a family which belongs to the northern Yemeni Hashid tribal confederation and is strongly involved with ruling the Islah party) on the other came close to civil war. Salih needed his troops closer to the capital. The *Ansar al-Sharia* grasped the opportunity of this power vacuum to establish its Emirate of Waqar in Jaar. As a result, more than 100,000 people were displaced, and most of them sought refuge in Aden. Those without money stayed in schools;

others rented flats. More were forced to flee as a result of the fighting that took place when the Yemeni armed forces–supported by US drone and missile strikes–recaptured the territory.

[6] The military intervention in Yemen began on March 26, 2015, with Saudi Arabia's air strikes under the name "Decisive Storm," with support from a coalition of GCC states (except Oman), Pakistan, Jordan, Sudan, Egypt, and Morocco. The Houthis forced President Hadi to resign from office in January 2015 and put him under house arrest. Six weeks later, in February 2015, he fled to Aden, where he withdrew from his resignation. Internally, Houthi militias and loyalists of Ali Abdullah Salih advanced southward to take over all of Yemen. Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia, when the Houthi and Saleh militias entered Aden. There, he asked for support and the coalition began to bomb Yemen. Aden and

the surrounding southern governorates became the principal battleground of this war. The southern resistance, in which the segments of the Southern Movement are integrated, liberated Aden from the Houthi and the Salih militias on July 14, 2015.

[7] For further details, see International Crisis Group, "Yemen's Southern Question," "Breaking Point?"; Dahlgren, "The Snake," "The Southern Movement."

[8] The "southern cause" (*al-qadiyya al-janubiyya*) refers to the resistance to the marginalization of southern Yemenis after the PDRY's unification with the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in 1990. Both the marginalization and the subsequent resistance intensified after the war between the north and south in 1994 in which the north won.

→ [9] For further details, see *Southern Issue Working Group* 4.

[10] Southern grievances over land issues were recognized at the NDC and a special committee was established to find solutions.

[11] Before April 27, 2014, Southern Movement mouthpiece *Aden Live TV* screened an audio recording of Sheikh Abd al-Majid al-Zindani with subtitles as part of a documentary in 1994. Southerners often mention his speech in talks.

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Navigating the City Center: Young Street Hawkers in Algiers

Britta Elena

This paper explores the significance of navigating practices in the everyday life of young street hawkers in the peripheral urban areas of Algiers. The French expression *naviguer* ("navigating") is used by young people in colloquial Arabic to describe practices of getting by and being on the move in outdoor urban spaces. By navigating the central spaces of the Algerian capital, young people resist social and spatial exclusion. Based on the results of research conducted at Martyrs Square between 2009 and 2012, this paper aims to scrutinize the "politics of navigating" and argues that navigating practices both preserve and challenge the status quo.

Keywords: **Algiers; Youth; Urban Peripheries; Informality; Street Politics**

Introduction

The street hawkers I interviewed for my dissertation "Youth and Resistance in Algiers"[1] live and/or work in the streets of the Algerian capital's old town, the Casbah. The Casbah is a geographically central area and the ancient core of the precolonial city, which has become increasingly marginalized due to urban renewal projects since the colonial era (1830-1962). The discourses of the "contested city" and "the rebellious youth" are interwoven into the cultural texture of the Algerian capital and are closely related to the history of the Casbah. The Casbah was made famous by the Algerian-Italian film *The Battle of Algiers* by Gillo Pontecorvo (1966) and became a symbolic place of resistance for the urban poor (Whitfield). Its youth emerged as actors of resistance during the anti-colonial liberation war (Carlier).

In the postcolonial era the newly formed government of the *Front de Libération National* (National Liberation Front or FLN) considered young people to be the hope of the nation. As a result, the development of the education system was made a priority in independent Algeria.[2] Yet despite the efforts of the Algerian government to integrate young people into society, the marginalization of the young generation, especially in working

class areas, increased and their frustrations grew (Rarrbo; Musette). In the 1988 October riots, young Algerians took to the streets of the capital to express their anger about the *hogra* ("power abuse, injustice") under the FLN's government. Martyrs Square,[3] a central place between the port and the hill of the Casbah in the center of Algiers, became the stage for the military's violent repression of the 1988 youth riots. The October riots were the first serious conflict between the state and the young generation in independent Algeria (Abada; Semiane).[4]

The mobilization of young Algerians by the *Front Islamique du Salut* (Islamic Salvation Front) in the 1990s has shaped the image of a youth at risk and youth as risk (El-Kenz; Vergès). This relates in particular to young people from *quartiers sensibles et difficiles d'Alger* ("sensitive and difficult areas") which are affected by unemployment, overcrowding and poverty (Iamarène-Djerbal). These young people are often represented in media discourse as "the youth from the street" and are associated with crime and disorder. They are also often excluded from the education system and formal economy and are exposed to precarious work and violence. They are considered to be at risk, and as a result of their exclusion they may develop oppositional identities, revolt or join radical political groups and thus are represented as a risk.[5]

Today the Casbah is akin to an "inner city periphery" and is highly contested due to its central position and cultural capital. Urban renewal plans include public resettlement programs, and many of the former inhabitants of the Casbah now live in the growing fringes of the Algerian capital. Thus, in addition to social exclusion they have also been placed *spatially* on the periphery of the future world city.[6] Yet many young people refuse to be taken out of the center and continue to come back to the Casbah. They feel attached to their ancient *houma* (the North African expression for "neighborhood districts"), which has a strong notion of social cohesion and a sense of community (Lesbet; Grangaud). They also stay connected to the Casbah to secure their livelihoods. Many of the Casbah's inhabitants, and especially its young male population, resort to informal economies[7] to combat unemployment. The youth unemployment rate in the Casbah is, as in the rest of the capital and the country, high. According to the Arab Human Development Report from 2009, Algeria has the highest youth unemployment rate among Arab countries, at 46 percent. Many young people find it difficult to achieve the status of adulthood: without work they are unable to purchase housing and get married.
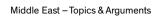
Against the backdrop of the dominant representation of an immobile, unemployed youth, embodied by the concept of *hittistes*,[8] the young are in fact very mobile. In order to overcome obstacles in everyday life, they are forced to navigate public urban spaces and find ways of getting by. Young people's navigating practices transform the public spaces of their neighborhood into a large marketplace. Martyrs Square, a former symbol of the liberation war and later of the youth revolt, is now a popular venue for the informal street market in Algiers, connecting the Casbah, the port, Bab el-Oued and the city center.

Before presenting my empirical findings on the navigating practices at Martyrs Square, I will outline the theoretical field of youth and urban studies to which the concept of navigating can be related.

"Navigating" as a Concept at the Intersection of Urban and Youth Studies

The analysis of the navigating practices of young people in Algiers focuses on the everyday life of youth in transforming urban environments. In research on 21st-century cities in the MENA region, youth has emerged as a specific social category which has given insights into social change

and new forms of mobilization (Herrera and Bayat; Honwana; Gertel and Ouaissa). The expression *naviguer* ("navigating"), which was often heard in street hawkers' conversations in Algiers, caught my attention. Navigating is a term from the Latin *navis* ("ship") and *agere* ("to route, to govern") and describes the art of guiding a ship on the sea along a particular route. Today it is a frequently used expression to describe the need for orientation and direction in relation to the complexity, increasing mobility, and the economic and political transformations of the 21st century. The meaning of the word in the colloquial Arabic of young people from peripheral urban areas in Algiers is not that different and has taken on the meaning of being on the move and helping yourself to get by and make a living.

Honwana uses the term "navigating" to refer to the unstable position of youth in between:

> Despite being deprived of a locus of power, they are able to navigate within a multiplicity of spaces and states of being: being simultaneously children and adults, victims and perpetrators, civilians and soldiers, and so forth. ("Innocent and Guilty" 50-51)

In *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood* (Christiansen et al.) the concept of navigating is applied to analyze youth as a position in motion: Young people "navigate" their livelihoods as well as the construction of their identities in their journey to becoming adults. The cities of the Global South have a very young population. Youth thus gains much attention within urban studies and, vice versa, the city is in the focus of many youth studies (Hansen).

In *Urban Navigations: Politics, Space and the City in South Asia*, McFarlane and Anjaria emphasize the "contingent particularities of urban transformation in practice" and analyze how "people make sense of and work their way through diverse urban environments, often in context of deep political, economic and social inequality" (6).

Instead of the dystopic descriptions of the megacities of the Global South, research that can be assembled by the term "subaltern urbanism" (Roy, "Slumdog Cities" 227) recognizes the ability of "ordinary people" (Bayat, Life as Politics) to "operate more resourcefully in under-resourced cities" (Simone, "Pirate Towns" 357). Subaltern urbanism brings into focus the everyday practices of those who are placed in a peripheral position (socially and/or spatially), e.g. the youth, the urban poor, or even the *majority* (Simone, "Ineligible Majority"). This paper is interested particularly in the situation of youth in between everyday "survival" and urban protest.

The navigating practices of the young street hawkers at Martyrs Square in Algiers show many parallels to the practices that Honwana refers to as "getting by," a phrase that is used by young people in South Africa. In the same sense, Tunisian and Senegalese youth talk about *débrouillage* (Honwana, Time of Youth 62):

> Rather than succumbing to passivity, they are constantly on the alert for opportunities, consciously plan possible scenarios, and resourcefully take action in pursuit of a livelihood. (61)

Young people in Bissau speak about *dubriagem*, which Vigh describes as "a dynamic quality of attentiveness and ability to act in relation to the movement of the social terrain one's life is set in" (52).

In the context of the urban poor in the authoritarian regimes of the MENA region, Bayat introduces the concept of "quiet encroachment" (*Life as Politics*). This concept refers to everyday practices found in informal economies, e.g. the illicit construction or occupation of houses without property rights or the use of public infrastructure without paying for it. He uses the concept of "quiet encroachment" to emphasize that everyday life of the urban poor is not only about survival; people try to improve their position in the social

space. Being aware of their exclusion, they appropriate the outdoor urban spaces of the city. The state's attempts to control these spaces sometimes provoke protest and revolts, particularly in places where many people are affected by poverty and housing shortages and, as a result, are forced to use and appropriate the street as a working and meeting place.

The urban outdoor spaces such as streets, squares and parks also play an important role as places of encounter and communication for the mobilization of the urban poor (Droz-Vincent). Even if their motivation is neither ideological nor oppositional, there is a connection between "quiet encroachment" and loud revolts. Street hawkers, for example, get in the way of renewal plans, which seek to drive out informal markets from the city and exclude the urban poor to the peripheries. Thus the "city-inside-out" (Bayat, "Politics in the City-Inside-Out") becomes a "fertile ground for the expression of street politics" (Life as Politics 12). Here, "street politics" not only refers to street riots or to the actions of social movements using the street as a stage for their protests, but to all kinds of occupations of the street, which oppose the authorities and increase the autonomy of the urban poor. At the same time, the "informal" spaces may function as an out-

let for the pressure and frustrations of precarious everyday life.

The following examples from my empirical findings shed light on the functioning of navigating practices in between preserving and challenging the status quo.

Navigating at Martyrs Square

A young boy, about twelve years old, approaches two street hawkers in a central shopping street of Algiers begging for some money. "Begging is a sin. Go navigating!" one of the street hawkers answers back (participant observation, 23 Feb. 2011).[9] Buying mobile phones and reselling them is often one of the initial navigating activities seen amongst young people. On Martyrs Square navigating can also include formal, informal and illegal practices of selling and reselling. In most cases navigating refers to those who spend their day outside walking around, meeting people and waiting for new opportunities. Even the people who have a stall in a fixed place still have to be constantly on the move in order to buy merchandise, find a place to store their wares or simply keep connected with friends in the neighborhood. Navigating may seem as an erratic way of moving through the city, but it encompasses the imagination of a "course" to succeed. Navigating can also mean "surviving," but its objective is

often to accumulate economic and social capital. The street hawkers I interviewed claimed to make better money than in formal jobs: "Before I worked in a confectioner's, but I quit. It was exploitation. On the street, I earn more than the monthly salary in less than a week" (Nazim. Personal interview. 1 Mar. 2011).
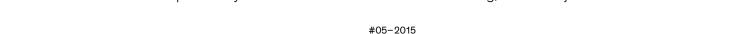
Navigating is not only restricted to economic practices, but also includes social activities, such as being around in the streets to meet people, connecting with them, and finding help or new opportunities. "I spend up to 18 hours a day outside and only go home to eat. I have to survive somehow" (Rebah. Personal interview. 10 Jan. 2011). Rebah's family had been relocated to Dar el-Beida, but he had remained with two sisters in their ancient house in the Casbah to stay in the center of Algiers.

Mehdi, a former street hawker who now owns a van and offers a transport service, explains the meaning of the street for the young:

The street is a way of making money. You can sell clothes or cigarettes. […] A young person who owns a small car, although he does not have a license from the government, will start to work as a taxi driver without license - because the street is ours! (Mehdi. Personal interview. 5 Mar. 2011)

Markets are dense spaces of mobilities, connections and exchange. That is why central spaces such as Martyrs Square play an important role in young people's urban navigations. Due to its central position, geographically as well as within the public transport network, and the fact that it connects the city center with the peripheries, it has become a hot spot for selling. Aware of the advantage of living close by, young people from the surrounding areas identify Martyrs Square as *their houma* ("neighborhood") and take for themselves the right to sell there.[10] The space at Martyrs Square is contested and places are even rented or sold to outsiders.

Especially for those who were relocated to peripheral areas, the markets function as more than just a place to work. The work at the markets keeps them connected to the center of the city. Hamada, for example, has been selling butter and marmalade at Martyrs Square for about 15 years. He navigates in order to save up money for marriage. He started working on the streets after he was relocated from the Casbah to the eastern periphery of Algiers. When he eventually gets married he hopes to stop working on the streets and take over his father's shop in his family's hometown of Ouargla, in the south of Algeria. Every day he travels between the Casbah and Bordj el-Kiffan in the eastern

periphery of Algiers. The eastern periphery of Algiers has been growing rapidly since the 1990s due to the construction of new high-rise building areas in the context of the public relocation programs.

In 2014 many families from the Casbah, Bab el-Oued and other poor inner urban areas and squats were relocated by the *Wilaya* ("city council") of Algiers to new social housing projects in the growing periphery in the south of Algiers. While the new buildings and apartments are popular among the relocated people, the more and more remote locations of the new urban districts are not. Although the necessary infrastructure has been promised, it is often underdeveloped and people are taken out of their social networks and livelihood spaces. In order to maintain their social and economic resources, young people have to increase their mobility and travel daily to the city center and back. Travelling by public transport, if available, takes too much time. This situation has created new possibilities for navigating, as anyone who owns a car can offer transport service. Taking a *taxi clandestin* ("taxi without license") is a cheaper alternative to the growing number of private taxi companies. Once they have arrived at the market, they connect with other *navigators*. They share stalls, rent out their space on the market to outsiders or

newcomers and invest the income in other businesses. They also have store rooms rented from shop owners in the narrow streets around the market. Some occupy empty buildings for that purpose. Although Hamada has been living in Bordj el-Kiffan for about 15 years, he feels attached to the Casbah. Being a *wlid houma* ("a son of the neighborhood") is important for getting a space on the market and guarantees solidarity and support from other street hawkers in the event of problems with outsiders or the police (Chabou 155-56).

Urban renewal plans have seen increased attempts to evict the informal markets from the public spaces in Algiers. Yet many of the young people—and their families—depend on the income of informal economies because of high youth unemployment rates. For this reason, their engagement in illegal navigating practices is legitimized by the majority of people, though many criticize the growing number of young people occupying the street. On the other hand, the street hawkers are critical of inequalities and their social and spatial exclusion: "We live in black-and-white areas! They are underdeveloped and there is nothing to do for us!" (Samir. Personal interview. 9 Mar. 2011). "Black-and-white areas" is an expression used by young people to criticize the lack

or decay of infrastructure and the unavailability of social or cultural activities. They also describe poor urban areas as "Third World" areas compared to the "well developed" residential areas of Algiers. Even when the street hawkers I interviewed showed no interest in formal politics or associational life, a popular protest culture shaped their sense of belonging. They expressed their anger in football fan songs or rap about the government and celebrate clandestine migration and global figures of resistance, e.g. Che Guevara or Tupac Shakur. In 2010 a police raid on the street market in the Casbah turned into a violent confrontation between hundreds of young street hawkers and the police (Semmar). After the outbreak of riots in several cities in Algeria in January 2011 and against the backdrop of the Arabic Spring, the state and media focused their attention on Martyrs Square—the symbol of the youth revolt in 1988. However, there was no rioting on Martyrs Square. On the contrary, business was flourishing.

In March 2011 Martyrs Square was getting cramped. It was fenced off for the construction of a new metro station, and inside the fenced area, civil guardians were holding a sit in, which resulted in increased police numbers and police vans around the square. Despite the large police presence around the square, the street market was being tolerated again after police attempts to clear it in 2010. The lack of space did however cause tensions between bus drivers and street hawkers as well as amongst the street hawkers themselves. Yet, by using the fence to present their wares, the street hawkers were able to integrate it into the market. The police clearly tolerated the street market in order to avoid new confrontations with street hawkers: "They let us sell now. They're afraid we will rise up!" one street hawker said in an interview (March 2011). "We profit and make money," he said, knowing very well that the non-intervention of the state against the informal street market was just another form of control and that the tolerance would not last.

Young people from the street are aware that they are a demographic and political force. They struggle and sometimes fight for the autonomy to navigate. They constantly move between the peripheral and invisible urban areas and central spaces such as Martyrs Square that have a high capital and symbolic power. The street hawkers' occupation of the central marketplaces (against the backdrop of the Arab Spring) can not only be seen as a sign of the demobilization of the young from peripheral areas in a top-down hierarchy. Their presence in the city center is also a political statement: it is a claim to the right to the city[11] from those dwelling in social and/or spatial peripheries.

Conclusion

By navigating the streets around Martyrs Square, young people find a way of getting by despite the structural constraints and obstacles in their everyday lives. Using the term *naviguer*, young street hawkers evoke an unknown and changing space involved in their practices of getting by and the need of orientation in that space. In the case of these young people, this space is the street. They are constantly moving in the urban outdoor spaces looking for opportunities. Knowing that the urban space is unpredictable like the sea, they learn to negotiate rapid changes and strong currents and are always ready to alter their course. They also learn to "govern" themselves and their paths to adulthood.

On the whole they avoid direct political confrontations, with the exception of the street riots after police raids against the street market. Navigating thus does not seem to be a form of resistance in the sense of direct oppositional action (Hechler and Phillips; Raby), but rather compliant action responding to the neoliberal culture of self-help and flexibility in the cities of the 21st century. From this

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viewpoint, navigating practices may contribute to preserving the status quo as they help to compensate for the problems and frustrations of unemployed youth. In the more open postmodern definition of resistance, navigating could, however, count as resistance. By navigating, young people increase their resources and autonomous spaces. In doing so, they sometimes resort to practices which subvert the plans of the authorities and elites. Through their presence in the central public spaces of the city they resist social and political exclusion. The desire for a better life is the young street hawkers' main motivation for working at Martyrs Square, but, at the same time, the practices of navigation need and create communities. The street thus becomes an important venue for encounter, identification and often mobilization of the young. If navigating as a "self-help" practice is in itself not political, it is the empowering function of navigating which is a precondition for the development of a generational conscience or oppositional identities. *Navigating* is thus a specific urban practice which can be considered as simultaneously challenging and maintaining the status quo.

Notes

[1] The data in this article come from field research I conducted for my dissertation on youth and resistance in Algiers between 2008 and 2012 during several multi-month stays. I worked with a qualitative methodology mix of mind-maps, interviews, group interviews and visual documentation. I conducted my research in different places in the Casbah and the neighboring area of Bab el-Oued, such as a public "youth center" in the lower Casbah, a library for students in the upper Casbah, a Kung Fu school in Bab el-Oued and a youth association in Bologhine. The interviews with the street hawkers were conducted at the seaside or in a crowded coffee shop in Bab el-Oued. The interviews were translated if necessary from Arabic to French by one of their colleagues. In total I conducted about 16 recorded interviews with street hawkers. In addition I had many informal conversations and I sometimes left my camera with one of the street hawkers and he took photos and filmed his colleagues and friends. The visual material gave me an additional impression especially of the market at night time and of their journeys from home to the center, etc.

[2] In his writing on the *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon wrote about the importance of integration and education of young people in the development of the independent states (171). His thoughts are echoed in the Algerian charter of 1964 (Rarrbo 66).

[3] Martyrs Square is the former *Place du Gouvernement* in the lower Casbah, the center of pre-colonial Algiers. It was the first urban intervention by the French to demonstrate colonial power through urbanism (Çelik). The square connected the French quarters with the indigenous quarter, the Casbah. It was thus a meeting place for Europeans and Algerians in the divided city. Today it still has the function of a venue connecting the city center with the marginalized areas of the Casbah and Bab el-Oued. It is also an arrival place for the inhabitants from the spatial peripheries coming to the city center by public transport.

[4] The October revolt marks the beginning of the democratization process and reforms which led to constitutional changes in 1989. In 1991, when the FIS won the elections, the Algerian "spring" ended with the withdrawal of the president and the imposed emergency rule in 1992. This was the beginning of the so-called "black decade" of civil war between the government and Islamists who were forced to go underground.

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→ [5] The expression *youth at risk and youth as risk* comes from the double-faced construction of a vulnerable and dangerous youth in its position in between childhood and adulthood in social sciences (Wyn and White; Comaroff and Comaroff).

[6] With the plan "Alger 2029" the government gave the development of Algiers great importance.

[7] For the context of urban informality in Algeria see Chabou (131-149) and Hammouda (80-85).

[8] The expression *hittiste* is a composition of Arabic *hait* ("wall") and the French suffix *-iste*. It is used to refer to the young unemployed who lean all day on the wall watching the time pass by. The *hittistes* became well known in the 1990s through the work of the French-Algerian comedian artist Fellag (See Le Pape 42).

[9] All citations from the interviews are translated from French/Arabic into English.

[10] For the relation between the private and public space in Algiers see Lesbet; Dris.

[11] The "Right to the City" is a slogan that was introduced to social sciences by Henri Lefebvre in 1968. Lefebvre used it to claim the right to a radical participant urbanism including the right to centrality not only in a spatial but in a social sense. Today the slogan is mainly used in the reduced sense of "right to basic housing" or "right to affordable housing" in city centers.

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"Getting By" at the Urban Periphery: Everyday Struggles of Informal Merchants in Tunisia

Johannes Frische

The article examines the significance of informal economic practices, e.g. street vending and informal commerce, for young merchants from Ettadhamen, a neighborhood situated in the northwestern periphery of the Greater Tunis area. It further addresses cross-border trade in the Tunisian-Libyan and Tunisian-Algerian border regions in which some of these merchants are indirectly involved. Peripheralization therefore does not imply complete socio-spatial exclusion. Peripheries rather offer important, albeit limited possibilities, to acquire resources through practices that are situated in the interstices between legality and illegality. As these possibilities often avoid state regulation and control, the article also addresses the ambivalent nature of the state-society relations that shapes everyday encounters between inhabitants and state agents, especially the police.
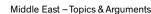
Keywords: Tunisia; Urban Periphery; State-Society Relations; Post-Revolutionary Transformation; Informal Commerce

This article examines different tactics among young, informal traders in Tunisia coping with insecurity from a peripheral position in urban life. Such tactics (De Certeau) involve multiple forms of informal economic practices, such as street vending and cross-border trade. These tactical practices must be seen in light of changing structural conditions, which have resulted in the wake of the revolution that followed the revolts in December 2010 and January 2011. The article analyzes both everyday forms of popular agency as well as their relationship with the government and the effects of state power. The empirical case studies result from field research in the popular, peri-urban neighborhood of Ettadhamen, in the northwestern fringes of the Tunisian capital. The research was conducted between 2012 and 2013.[1]

Peripheries and Marginality: A Conceptual Approach

Although Loïc Wacquant's concept of advanced marginality draws upon insights from the American ghetto and the French banlieue, i.e. zones of urban relegation within societies of the Global North, several of his outlined dynamics can also be applied to urban peripheries in Tunisia. In the case of Ettadhamen, this holds for the territorial containment of lower and mid-

dle class populations in a peri-urban district that is insufficiently integrated into the national economy and the regular wage labor sector. Peripheralization is thus the effect of a spatially ingrained social order that has been produced through both uneven economic development and the governmentality of the Tunisian state. While this order was shaped under the regimes of Ben Ali and Habib Bourguiba, it has roots in the colonial period.

Aside from its spatial dimension, peripheralization and marginalization have particularly affected specific societal groups. In a society characterized by deeply entrenched inequalities, instead of maintaining one homogenous working class, processes of neoliberal restructuring have produced fragmented forms of precariousness, social differentiation and exclusion. Unemployed youth, female household workers, casual informal workers and street children belong to such "precarized" groups. They not only face unemployment or unstable and precarious employment conditions. They are also positioned on the margins of the otherwise solid social security system in Tunisia (Destremeau; Ben Cheikh 2). Since they lack both formalized employment conditions and a sufficient and stable income, which would allow them to make contributions to social security

funds, they often do not have access to social protection.

Peripheries can also be spaces where everyday informal practices take root in the niches of a dominant socio-political order that is maintained by powerful social groups and their interests. Looking at everyday modes of tactical action, one can discover the creativity of peripheries and margins as they not only entail passive submission but also employ different forms of popular agency from below (Bayat, "Marginality" 19). Based on her important study on Favelados in Rio de Janeiro, Janice Perlman argues that marginality constitutes a myth in the sense that it mistakes systematic exclusion and stigmatization for being passively marginal (131). By the same token, she also points out that in spite of systematic exclusion, different forms of internal socio-political organization and cooperation, which are based on solidarity, exist in the proximity relations between friends and neighbors in the Favelas (142). Marginalization and peripheralization are not only a curse but also as an opportunity where excluded groups can survive and overcome economic constraints (Bayat, "Marginality" 14). The constitution of the marginal or the peripheral does not necessarily follow the logic of total exclusion (Yúdice 214). Despite their marginalized positions, peripheries are often sites

where the state's power and its borders are contested and reconfigured and where informal channels, parallel networks and transnational economic flows perpetuate connections with the global world economy (Roitman 195). Albeit on a small scale, the empirical cases of informal merchants in the wake of the Tunisian revolution will demonstrate that informal practices can persist despite the center's dominance. Although these informal practices primarily aim at coping with the insecurities, risks and constraints that result from a peripheral position, they produce forms of survivalism and self-organization that largely avoid dominant structures and institutions. Such informal economic practices and the formal system, which is to a greater extent structured by official rules, exist side by side in Ettadhamen.

Ettadhamen: Contested Urban Space in the Periphery of Greater Tunis

Ettadhamen was created under the rule of Bourguiba in 1966 as a public program that provided social housing for rural migrants and was given the name *al-taḍāmun* ("solidarity"). Between 1975 and 1984 it witnessed considerable population growth due to the influx of intra-urban migrants who came from the Medina and from *gourbivilles* ("spontaneous agglomerations") inside the city of

Tunis (ARRU 24). This development was in contrast to the situation of older informal neighborhoods that had come into being through rural exodus. It was thus the result of a redistribution of populations within the capital (Laroussi 45). Most of these residential migrants (56.4 percent) were also former rural migrants who originated from northwestern Tunisia, a traditional agricultural region, which contains the High Tell Mountains along with Beja, Jendouba and Le Kef as the most important cities (Chabbi, "L'Habitat spontané" 25; "Une Nouvelle forme" 90; "Urbanisation spontanée" 181). In view of this historical background, Ettadhamen serves as an example for the proliferation of "fringe urban communities" (Ali and Rieker 3) whose members were situated in the peripheries of larger cities negotiating and reproducing the rural-urban nexus (2). In the late 1970s, the insecure conditions of habitation in the neighborhood prompted the Tunisian state agencies to implement a number of urban planning projects that aimed to regulate real estate and improve infrastructure. These projects were partially financed through a credit from the World Bank (Chabbi, "Pratiques et logiques"). Ettadhamen and Douar Hicher were the priority zones of these policy efforts that now put a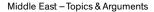 greater emphasis on the development of the republic's *zones d'ombre* ("shadow zones") and the integration of marginalized, *shaʿabī* ("popular") classes. However, despite significant infrastructural improvements, problems such as unemployment, crime, insufficient housing, and the socio-spatial segregation of the neighborhood not only persisted but rather increased (ARRU 55).

In 2012, the population of Ettadhamen in the Ariana governorate was 142,000 while the surrounding neighborhoods Douar Hicher and Mnihla counted 157,000 inhabitants. In total, these three neighborhoods comprised 300,000 inhabitants, which made it one of the most populated peri-urban agglomerations in North Africa (Chabbi, "Une Nouvelle forme" 168). In January 2011, it was one of the first neighborhoods within the capital where mobilizations of youth, most of whom were unemployed, targeted local police stations. The protests also entailed acts of pillage and sabotage. The three major industrial sites and the *maison des jeunes* ("youth center") were burned down by protesters. Moreover, a number of stores were looted and destroyed. However, in the aftermath of the protests, local youth took responsibility for security in the neighborhood by organizing local committees. These informal patrols called *lijān shaʿabiyya* ("popular committees") used the already existing networks in the neighborhood (Allal 59). They temporarily adopted a policing function in an effort to control the neighborhood's unsafe conditions. Ever since the fall of the regime enforcement of both security measures and public services that should be provided by local authorities such as the police and the municipality have been neglected. Self-organization and local networks, for example organizations belonging to the Salafi movement, constitute parallel structures of social regulation and control. Clashes between young, unemployed people and security forces have given Ettadhamen the label of a lawless zone where control mechanisms by state agents and institutions are limited (Belhassine). However, since August 2013, when the organization *Ansar al-Sharia* was classified as a terrorist group, security measures have been reinforced and several activists belonging to the militant branch of the Salafi movement have been arrested.[2]

Ettadhamen is predominantly a residential area due to modest infrastructure and lack of industrial production (ENDA 12). Spatial segregation and the proliferation of informal housing structure through illegal subdivisions did not favor the attraction of economic investments. Therefore, as public sector jobs were inaccessible for the

majority, the neighborhood Ettadhamen-Douar Hicher had already witnessed the dispersion of informal activities and services by 1980. By 1995, a rising number of households had invested in commercial activities. Many transformed one room of their house into an economic establishment for a particular kind of activity, mostly commerce-related. Most of the retail stores and commercial establishments are now concentrated around the main streets, 105th Street, 106th Street, Ibn Khaldun Street and the road leading from Tunis to Bizerte. 105th Street is characterized by a great number of informal side streets and ambulant vendors who mostly come from the vicinity. They predominantly sell vegetables, fruits, decor, household equipments, electronic appliances and *friperie* (very cheap, second-hand clothing which is distributed in bales). Local clients frequently buy from these vendors because they can negotiate cheaper prices. The small stores primarily offer low-value goods of modest quality that are suitable to the resources of the low-income strata in a popular neighborhood. If casual labor has regressed, commerce activities have greatly increased in the neighborhood, especially among the younger generation. According to a 2014 survey among 714 youth aged between 18-34 from Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen,

27.8 percent were self-employed as artisans or small merchants, and 20.3 percent were employed in commerce (International Alert 11). Moreover, the informal economy plays a significant role in Ettadhamen (Lamloum and Ben Zina 15). Like in many other popular neighborhoods informal commercial activities are connected to translocal circuits and flows of economic goods that extend to other areas and markets in the country.

The police in Ettadhamen tolerate these activities, which are illegal in terms of state regulations, and turn a blind eye towards the fact that these informal vendors do not hold the proper licenses to legalize their business (Police officer). One of the reasons why the state, to a great extent, tolerated informal economic activities, specifically informal commerce, before the Tunisian revolution in 2011, can be seen in its determination to depoliticize and appease poor populations in order to contain social unrest (Meddeb, "La Tunisie" 73). Although informal practices undermined the rule of law and bureaucratic norms, they were mostly in accordance with the logic of the police state and the security order. As Béatrice Hibou points out, the state's laissez-faire approach was one of the disciplinary techniques of power that was deeply entrenched in the patronage-system under Ben Ali (187).

However, to the Tunisian regime tolerating informal commerce also implied controlling it. Since the ruling family clan of the Trabelsi was keen on siphoning off profits for itself, the Tunisian authorities occasionally intervened. The municipal police in Tunis would carry out raids against street vendors and confiscate their products or take away scales from merchants selling fruits and vegetables if they were not willing to pay bribes. Ibrahim, a 23 years old retail trader working in the store of his parents on 105th Street in Ettadhamen refers to the situation prior to January 14, 2011:

Q: How did the authorities deal with independent commerce before the revolution?

A: Commerce was allowed, but the Trabelsi family intervened in it. They were the big ones who delivered all kinds of goods to the other small merchants. They were the ones who imported these kinds of goods. From China. They also demanded bribes (rashwa). First they were the ones who sold you their goods. And then they would also demand bribe money. They were big traders. We didn't deal with them directly. The police demanded the bribes every month. (Ibrahim)

The revolution brought about a greater degree of freedom in public life. The retrenchment of the security apparatus

allowed for the expansion of informal commerce as the enormous spreading of street vendors, many of them very young, in public places, e.g. squares, big avenues and around mosques, demonstrates (Ben Mahmoud). Controversial discussions about how to regulate the informal economy have been occurring ever since the fall of the regime in January 2011 and the beginning of the political transition process that followed. While most state officials see informality as a necessary evil, tradesmen from the formal sector complain about the negative effects on their own businesses; although, they sometimes benefit from the informal distribution networks as well. Since May 2011, the official policy of the government aims to curb informal activities due to their negative effects on the productive sectors and the price level (SlateAfrique). On August 26 2011, the ministry of the interior passed a resolution that banned illegal street vending starting in September 2011. Any street vendor selling goods would be forced to pay a fine (Gamha). However, restrictive laws and regulations are often not implemented on the ground.

Everyday Struggles of "Getting By:" Individual Cases
The following cases are meant to illuminate the everyday struggles of local inhab-itants from Ettadhamen as they work to make a living (al-maʿīsha) and to secure their economic survival at the urban periphery. At the same time, they point to the ambivalent relationship with the state, in particular its local manifestations such as the municipality (al-baladaiyya), fiscal authorities (qabāḍa māliyya), the police (al-ḥākim) or the employment center (maktab al-tashghīl). At the local level of peripheral areas, the boundaries between state and society are often more porous and permeable (Mitchell), which may lead to both immediate conflict and mediation. Despite the fact that they occupy marginal positions and belong to a marginalized population, the actors are capable of developing informal tactics that use the few economic opportunities available in a spatially segregated and economically relegated neighborhood at the periphery. Furthermore they draw from access to local networks of solidarity based on kinship, friendship and vicinity. The high significance of work as a fundamental social value and as an obligatory source of revenue explains why many young people resort to informal activities, even if the absorptive capacities of the informal economy are thereby increasingly stretched.

Economic Survival in Face of State Control in Everyday Life
The situation of street vendors in Ettadhamen, like in other neighborhoods and informal markets of the city, has always been highly insecure, especially under the regime of Ben Ali. Informal vending circuits are widespread across the city since they allow for the circulation of perishable foodstuffs such as fruits and vegetables or low quality goods, for example cheap clothing and household equipment, which the formal circuits cannot easily provide at such localities. While street vending is often practiced without any kind of formalization or licensing and provides a source of income for those who are unqualified and do not have a chance to find a regular and formal job, it involves the risk of facing controls by the municipality police.[3] The French expression for street vendors vendeurs à la sauvette ("vendors on the run"), which is widely used in Tunisia, alludes to this risk and the need to run away from the police. The account of Abderrahim shows the severe impact of such controls on the livelihood of a self-employed, informal merchant. Being the son of a construction worker from a town in northern Tunisia, he went to primary school until the age of 14. He then quit school and started searching for a job due to financial constraints within the fam-

ily. However, he could only find jobs as a ʿāmil yaumī ("casual laborer") and was unemployed most of the time before he started working as a painter. One of his colleagues put him into touch with a private company employing 45 workers. Abderrahim obtained a permanent employment contract, but it did not include social security benefits. Through this job, he earned a monthly salary of 480 DT—slightly above the SMIG[4]—for working eight hours per day.[5] However, when he became exhausted through this kind of hard, physical work he searched for an alternative. He invested the savings from his job (500 DT) into the creation of a street vending business for selling fruits. Every other day he rented an informal transport car and went to the wholesale market in Bir Qasʿa in the southern suburb of the capital Ben Arous, where he bought peaches, bananas, apples and almonds in order to sell them on a public square near Ettadhamen. However, he always feared controls by the authorities which, before January 2011, regularly interfered in this kind of informal, non-licensed street vending. The police of the municipality came four times to disperse his vending stall and confiscate his goods and scales. Knowing that the police sometimes accepted bribes he unsuccessfully tried to stop them by offering

money: "What else can I do if not this kind of work? Where can I work if not here? Why did they come to disperse? It's not reasonable" (Abderrahim). Afterwards, Abderrahim was compelled to start from scratch again and spend his savings on acquiring new equipment and new goods. He mentioned that since the regime collapsed, there were no more raids by the municipality police. However, it has become much more difficult for him to make a living through this activity because of an overall higher price level in the country and because of a decrease in profit margins. Abderrahim's case shows how visible informal practices, which take place openly in public space and which the authorities usually tolerate, can at certain instances be subdued by controls and repressive measures. His perspective also reveals that local actors consider these practices, which are illegal according to official law, as legitimate or licit for the simple reason that they constitute their sole source of income. Therefore, the degree of toleration by the authorities has increased since the regime's collapse. Controls, bribe extortions, dispossessions and other repressive measures have been reduced but have not completely vanished. Ibrahim, the retail trader on 105th Street, explains what he thinks

are the reasons for this changed policy vis-à-vis street vendors:

Because of the economic situation, the state does not persecute them very much. Unemployment has increased after the revolution. It's better they do street vending than stealing things. There are priorities and there are concessions. The state allows for intişāb fauḍawī ("street vending"), so that crime and thefts won't increase in the country. Before the revolution there was more control on street vending. It was part of the suppressive regime under Ben Ali. All the people had to be afraid of the police. (Ibrahim)

Between Control and Laissez-Faire: Stakes and Risks of Cross-Border Trade

While the majority of street vendors do not hold a permit and thus occupy a completely informal status, most of the retail traders usually possess both a license from the municipality for their store and a permit for paying taxes. However, the goods they commercialize are often not formally acquired but rather originate from informal circuits that are connected to trans-local networks of cross-border trade and smuggling. The merchants from popular neighborhoods in the periphery of Greater Tunis—among them street vendors, ambulant vendors and retail trad-

ers—usually acquire these smuggled goods at local markets such as Sidi Boumendil or Melassine in Tunis. Some also travel to markets in cities close to the border, for example Ben Guerdane near the Tunisian-Libyan border and Kasserine near the Tunisian-Algerian border.[6] At these markets they purchase cheap merchandise that is mostly produced in China and Southeast Asia (Meddeb, Courir ou mourir 36). In 1988, the opening of the frontier between Libya and Tunisia at the border posts, Ras Jedir and Dhhiba, considerably accentuated the exchanges of both economic goods and human beings between the two countries. This holds in particular for the activities of ambulant merchants, which has led to an explosion of informal commerce in the Tunisian-Libyan border region (governorates of Medenine and Tataouine) due to the importation of cheap manufactured products into Tunisia (tobacco, electronic devices, car equipment, beauty products, household equipment, decor, clothing). Having arrived on Tunisian soil, the goods are later distributed by wholesalers via extensive networks to informal markets—so-called *souk libya*—all across the country (Boubakri 242-43). These cross-border exchanges can reach outstanding monetary value. In 2013, the annual value

of goods loaded at the point of purchase that passed through the border post, Ras Jedir, was estimated at 467.47 millions DT (Ayadi et al. 17). As for the Tunisian-Algerian border region, smuggling has greatly increased since 2011, in particular the trafficking of Algerian fuels which are approximately ten times cheaper than Tunisian fuels (21).

Ibrahim refers to this ambivalent legal situation of commercializing goods that originate from cross-border trade in the case of his parents' retail business. When he was 23, he successfully passed the baccalaureate exam and pursued his studies at the University of La Manouba. After three months of studying, he quit university because he was unsatisfied with the studying conditions and the low value of the certificate that would have left him with poor job perspectives. Instead, he started working in a retail store on one of the major avenues in Ettadhamen, which is owned by his parents, and sold household equipment and decor materials to local clients from the neighborhood. He points out that before the Tunisian revolution he went to acquire the goods in Ben Guerdane. However, since the civil war in Libya in 2011 and the resulting deterioration of security conditions in the border regions, the supply of available goods has decreased, prices

for smuggled goods have risen considerably and border controls have intensified due to the proliferation of the illegal arms trade.[7] Therefore, his family prefers to purchase the merchandise in Algeria or from the informal market in Kasserine. Ibrahim explains how the authorities regulate this form of retail trading business and how he deals with police controls:

Q: Do you have a permit for this store?
A: Yes, we have one. A *ruḫṣa* ("license") from the municipality and a *batinda* ("permit") for paying taxes. We pay taxes on the income. I give you an example. If your income is 2,000 DT you pay a percentage of it as a tax on your income. The police of the municipality or the price control can ask: "Do you have a license and bills?" If not, they confiscate your goods, saying that they are stolen because there is no what we call *legal origin*. They are considered stolen or smuggled goods. That's why you need the bills. If you buy goods from over there [Algeria] you ask them for a bill. The police waits at the customs. If you don't have bills they demand bribes from you. And the bills don't even have any value. You bring back the bills for two things. The other one is the *murāqaba iqtiṣādiyya* ("economic control") of the store. Someone from customs comes here and carries

out a control. They ask for the bills for different goods. So you have to give them the bills. If you don't have a bill they will assume that the goods are either stolen or smuggled. (Ibrahim)

As Ibrahim insinuates, false documentation can be used as a means to give informal practices the appearance of legality. Similar to wholesale traders, who possess formal enterprises and deal with huge quantities of imported goods, retail traders partially operate in informally. Their businesses are formalized, but they frequently engage in informal practices such as irregular acquisitions of goods, nondeclaration and tax evasion (Laroussi 182). Informal activities related to cross-border trade constitute both regional border economies and the networks of distribution and consumption of goods that reach across the republic. They are situated in an interstice between legality and illegality.[8] Cross-border trade is considered legitimate in the eyes of the actors involved, who use it as a means to assure their *khobza* ("daily bread"), their economic security and a decent standard of living (Meddeb, *Courir ou mourir* 43). Although cross-border trade represents, for the majority, an economy of "getting by" and coping with insecurity rather than financial accumulation, it may also offer the chance to achieve social upward mobility. It is thus

less about opposing state regulation in general and rather more about the demand for the right to have an alternative to the state's monopoly (49). This, however, also implies that the border is not a marginalized, segregated space but rather a source of revenue and subsistence in the country's peripheries (44).

It is often not easy to distinguish between the different actors involved in the networks of cross-border trade, i.e. merchants, traffickers, transporters, carriers, consumers or simple travelers. In the case of the merchants from Ettadhamen many of them are part of the numerous street vendors, small, itinerant traders and occasional merchants with modest financial means called *fourmis* ("ants") (Meddeb, *Courir ou mourir* 59; World Bank 4). These small merchants travel individually or as part of an organized group trip to informal markets in the Tunisian-Libyan border region, where they carry out their purchases (Meddeb, "*Courir ou mourir*" 55). At these markets, they can seize spontaneous opportunities for lucrative sales offers. They mostly buy electronic devices, household equipment or clothing. The latter can be divided into fripes and high quality, fashionable prêt-à-porter outfits, which are sold on the *souk libya* for relatively attractive prices. Usama, a thirty years old ambulant merchant from

Ettadhamen, describes how such trips to Ben Guerdane are arranged and how he organizes his trading activity:

For buying the products, I always went to Ben Guerdane. The first time I went there was for three days. I went together with the other merchants, with a group. They rent a car, they go there and come back. Everyone spends the money he or she has and brings back the products. There are some people who organize trips to Ben Guerdane – people who offer you a bus and a driver to bring you there for a special sum. I paid 40 DT. Roundtrip. I got to know these merchants here in Hay Ettadhamen. For going to Ben Guerdane, you leave in the evening and you arrive there the morning after. You go to the big market over there, and you buy your goods. I always bought furniture, electronic devices, appliances that you need for houses, for example stereo systems, cooking systems, ovens, microwaves, sometimes also washing machines. All the things that you need for the house. People would give me money and ask me to bring back something for them, for example a washing machine. Whenever I went I made a list of the things that I needed to bring back. A friend or a neighbor would come and tell me: "Buy me a washing machine or a micro-

wave." I brought them the things and they paid me afterwards. I buy the washing machine for 60 DT and I sell it for 100 DT. Of course, I bought other things at the same time, for example clothing. I keep those goods in the house. I went many, many times to Ben Guerdane. More than thirty times. (Usama)

These kinds of commercial trips also bear the risk of getting caught in controls by the police, by customs or by the *garde nationale*. Under the regime of Ben Ali, the organizers of these group journeys had to legitimate such trips through licenses obtained from local cells of the ruling single party RCD (Meddeb, *Courir ou mourir* 174). Those who travelled without any form of legalization needed to be prepared to bribe police and custom agents. Usama recalls:

Before, I always had to pay bribes on the way back to Tunis. All the merchants have to pay. They give a sum of money to the custom service, so that they let you pass with your goods. Each time a sum like 300 DT. For all of the merchants. Me, I pay something like 50 DT each time, sometimes 100 DT. It happens on the road from Ben Guerdane to Tunis. Because when you leave Ben Guerdane, you don't talk to the custom service. The patrols stop you on the

road. Sometimes they even stop you in Kairouan. (Usama)

As Usama points out, controls and bribe extortions have decreased since the regime collapsed. Personalized exchange relations based on a clientelistic rapport between transporters or smugglers and state agents minimize the risk of having to face imposed penalties. The interaction between small merchants and state agents is ambivalent. Rather than following generalized, pre-defined rules, it is a negotiated bargain that results from face-to-face encounters. On the side of the authorities it involves both a strategy of laissez-faire as well as moments of control and intervention in order to partially reinstate state power. In the interactions among merchants, transporters and smugglers personal connections are built through repeated transactions in order to foster trust and overcome the risk of being cheated.

Conclusions

The case studies have illustrated multiple tactical modes of how informal merchants from Ettadhamen cope with insecurity at the urban periphery. They point to both challenges as well as possibilities to turn constraints into opportunities. Peripheralization, therefore, does not imply a complete socio-spatial exclusion but rather an

integration under unequal terms. Peripheries bear some potential to gain autonomy and acquire resources, even if in most cases these potentials are very limited. This holds true for those local street and ambulant vendors in Ettadhamen, who circulate across the urban system of Tunis or who travel to border regions in order to seek opportunities for purchasing merchandise. Such potential opportunities, however, come with high risks and new constraints as these merchants have to struggle with decreasing profit margins, limited capital for investment and controls by police and customs officers.

The informal practices that inhabitants from Ettadhamen engage in are situated on the margins of legality; the limited degree of state intervention in Ettadhamen or the porosity of the borders to Libya and Algeria can be seen as representing the peripheralization of state power, which thereby allows for the proliferation of informal practices positioned in an interstice between legality and illegality. The relation between the state or its local manifestations and the informal merchants are ambivalent. They may shift from one moment to another when external conditions change and arrangements are disturbed. Despite a weakening of the state apparatus in the wake of January 2011, it is far from being powerless as its

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agents continue to occasionally intervene in informal practices. Since 2013 the country has actually witnessed a gradual reinforcement of security measures, especially in the border regions. Even the most subordinated actors of the informal economy, young ambulant merchants or street vendors, who conceive state power at times as absent, inert, arbitrary or repressive, still interact in their everyday circulations with the state's local representatives and agents. Informal merchants do not necessarily refuse its authority in principle. Many are willing to abide by the law, but they contest specific modes of power exertion (controls, confiscations, bribe extortions) or demand the re-adjustment of legal regulations, so that they can carry out practices that they consider to be licit in view of their material conditions. In particular, when these conditions are put at risk, subjectivities of dissent and even social unrest are likely to occur. For many informal merchants, inclusion into the formal system can be desirable if it provides access to social protection. However, it is only a viable option if it does not entail a total loss of autonomy and deprivation of vital opportunities, which semi-legal practices in peripheral areas can offer.

These microscopic social struggles over access to resources, although not directly linked to moments of open protest, constitute an everyday socio-spatial context in the urban peripheries from which local micro-politics can emerge.

Notes

[1] The data of this article consists of semi-structured qualitative interviews, which I conducted with informal workers and merchants in Ettadhamen in June and July 2012. More recent developments cannot be taken into account in this article.

[2] Salafis are part of local, territorialized networks of the neighborhood (ḥūma), which play an important role in organizing informal commerce. Due to space constraints, however, their role cannot be addressed in detail here.

[3] According to a survey by the Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability (TAMSS) and the Global Fairness Initiative (GFI), nearly 70 percent of independent, informal workers do not hold a license, and only 8 percent declared that they pay taxes (municipal or other taxes) (Global Fairness Initiative 42).

[4] *Salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti* ("minimum wage").

[5] In July 2012, the SMIG was 320 DT (Business News). According to a study conducted by TAMSS and GFI with 1,203 informal workers from different regions in Tunisia, more than two-thirds (72.5 percent) of the households of informal workers earn a monthly income of less than 600 DT, 15 percent earn between 600 and 799 DT, 22.3 percent between 400 and 599 DT, 35.7 percent between 200 and 399 DT and 14.4 percent earn less than 200 DT (Global Fairness Initiative 13).

[6] Unlike Ben Guerdane near the Tunisian-Libyan border or Kasserine near the Tunisian-Algerian border the neighborhood Ettadhamen, situated in the northwestern periphery of the Greater Tunis area, does not rank among the most significant centers for smuggling circuits. However, several informal merchants are directly or indirectly involved in informal transport and distribution networks. The smuggling of illegal goods such as drugs and arms is not dealt with in this article.

[7] Smuggling of both narcotics and arms existed already before January 14th but has increased considerably since that time, because controls by police, custom officers and *garde nationale* have loosened or even disappeared in some areas of the border regions (International Crisis Group 15).

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→ [8] Van Schendel frames such a liminal status as "illegal but licit" and refers to the fact that they are illegal according to official law but considered acceptable ("licit") by the actors themselves while states simultaneously condemn and partake in them.

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Interviews

Projects of Improvement, Continuities of Neglect: Re-Fragmenting the Periphery in Southern Rural Jordan

Katharina Lenner

This paper analyzes projects of improvement and continuities of neglect found in two peripheral regions in the rural south of Jordan. These areas have been framed as poverty pockets and singled out for special attention. Yet, despite the multitude of improvement projects targeting them since 1990, they have remained on the periphery. I argue that this has resulted from certain dynamics found within current strategies of intervention. These put people in their place as "locals" and render their concerns inferior to "national" or "global" interests. Accordingly, the transformations witnessed are best described as a socio-spatial re-fragmentation of governing strategies.

Keywords: Periphery; Re-Fragmentation; Jordan; Development; Poverty Alleviation; Rural

Introduction

Peripheries are made. They are shaped by spatially selective capital investment policies as much as by differential governmental representations of spaces, populations, and practices. While early works, grounded in world systems theory, largely focused on structural macroeconomic dimensions of peripherality, more recent contributions that are based on critical human geography have made it possible to see peripheralization as process and practice. This includes a discursive dimension (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann; Lefebvre). Such dynamics have only recently become a focus of scholarly attention in Middle East area studies, especially in political science accounts of state-formation and development. This is not least due to the realization that spaces "beyond the center" are central for understanding the genesis of the Arab revolutions (Clark; Hoffmann, Bouziane, and Harders).

In this article, I look at the history, dynamics and practices of peripheralization in southern rural Jordan. I explore how socio-economic and discursive forms of marginalization have unfolded over time, and to what degree these dynamics have changed since the 1990s/2000s when poverty alleviation and local development first became the

dominant paradigm for improvement projects in Jordan's rural areas. I focus on two (sub-) districts that have recently been singled out for particular concern under this new paradigm. Wadi Araba, a part of Jordan's southern *bādiya* (steppe)[1] located in the governorate of Aqaba, has long recorded the highest poverty rates of anywhere in the country. In the past few years, this has turned it into a laboratory for poverty alleviation interventions. Busayra, located in the highlands of the governorate of Tafila, has lower poverty rates but a richer history of intervention. Due to the nearby presence of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and its flagship Dana Biosphere Reserve, interventions taking place in Busayra in the name of poverty alleviation and local development are particularly entwined with conservation and eco-tourism initiatives. The two areas represent both sides of the common differentiation of rural Jordan into steppe and highland areas where rain-fed agriculture is common. While never an absolute distinction, the two types of areas are characterized by different ecologies, sources of livelihood, and modes of living. These range from fully and semi-nomadic to sedentary (Tell, *The Social* 27-39). A comparison of the two settings sheds light on

if and how peripheralization depends on these different contexts.

In what follows, I first give an overview of the limited place that Busayra and Wadi Araba have had in broader projects of development throughout the process of state-formation. I demonstrate that the marginalization of both areas has resulted from not only their longstanding dependence on the state, but also from their history of neglect, fragmentation, and selective governmental intervention. Subsequently, I trace how agencies and regulatory bodies nominally dealing with poverty alleviation and local development in the south of Jordan have proliferated since the 1990s. Some of the schemes currently implemented in these localities echo previous welfarist or developmental philosophies. Others reflect current developmental fashions such as the principles of participation and ownership. Based on observing their operation in the two areas, I argue that rather than being distinct in their approaches, these different interventions follow similar organizational goals. In effect, they exclude local populations from a meaningful role in developmental initiatives and put them in their place as "locals." I frame this transformation over time as a process of re-fragmentation of government and as a relative continuity of neglect, which is articulated through the

spatial Othering of the respective areas and populations. I further argue that peripheralization occurs not only on an (economic) macro-level, but also in the daily operations and framings of different agencies of improvement.

Methodologically, this article is based on a close reading of not only the available academic literature, but also of the reams of gray literature on the two areas produced by different governing agencies over the past 35 years. I also draw extensively on interviews and participant observations that were conducted with and among actors involved in improvement projects there. This fieldwork took place in Amman, the provincial capitals Tafila and Aqaba, and the areas themselves over the course of various stays in Jordan between 2007 and 2013. In Busayra and Wadi Araba, I focused on community-based organizations and local governmental institutions, particularly municipalities.

A History of State Dependence, Neglect and Selective Intervention

Framing the rural south of Jordan as peripheral may seem counter-intuitive to analysts of Jordanian history and politics. One of the most prevalent narratives about Jordan is, after all, that its rural population of Transjordanians and East Bankers has been a privileged recipient of state

largesse. Socio-economic development, so the common narrative goes, has strongly relied on the public sector and military as employers and providers of services and social security. Transfers peaked during the 1970s and early 1980s—a period frequently described as the "golden age" of the Jordanian welfare state. This expansion of welfare—made possible by high levels of political aid from the Gulf and other donors—secured rural inhabitants' loyalty to the Hashemite monarchy, whereas, in the more mixed populations of urban areas, the state took on a much less pronounced role (e.g., Baylouny; Brynen). Such a narrative is not only common in political science analyses of Jordan, but also among policy-shapers involved in improvement projects.

Yet on closer inspection, it becomes apparent that the welfare regime in southern Jordan has been far from universal. It has exhibited fragmentations along overlapping class, gender, spatial, and clientelist lines, however the spatial dimension is probably the most salient. While the central state and military undoubtedly played seminal roles in this part of the country, there is also ample evidence of neglect or, at best, selective intervention. Much like for the country at large, the history of developmental interventions in the south is intricately connected with

processes of state formation. The area came under Ottoman control significantly later than more northern provinces, yet remained largely under the rule of local orders until the Ottoman regime collapsed in World War I (Rogan). The primary means through which the Hashemites and British mandate officials consolidated the new state of Transjordan in the post-war era were the expansion of both the army and the public sector, as well as land registration.

In the southern *bādiya*, the Hashemites rewarded a number of local ʿashāʾir (kinship networks), which had supported them during the Arab revolt against the Ottomans, with a special status as Bedouin tribes. This came with subsidies and land for their leaders (e.g., Baumgarten 24-26; Bocco, "Espaces étatiques" 148), preferential recruitment of Bedouins into the Desert Patrol, and employment in public works. Tax exemptions for the most needy helped prevent famines in the 1920s and 1930s, when the previous livelihoods of local pastoralist communities were under severe threat. These welfarist interventions effectively fixed the economic dependence and political loyalty of the Bedouin to the newly established monarchy (Bocco and Tell). The army, which has since become a major employer, educator, and service provider

for some of the local kinship networks, remains a strong presence in the area (Abu Jaber, Gharaibeh, and Hill 37; Dajani 13-14; Tarawneh 98-100).

In the southern highlands, employment in the army and public sector only became a dominant feature during World War II. The importance of these sectors continued to grow throughout the 1950s and 1960s, bringing financial security, social mobility, and educational possibilities to many households. The available opportunities were further enhanced during the 1980s with the establishment of a state-owned cement factory and the exploitation of a nearby mine. In this way, salaried work became a primary strand of household survival strategies, alongside agricultural work (on privately owned plots or as sharecroppers), gardening, and herding (Lancaster and Lancaster, "Dana Reserve;" Palmer et al. 45; Tell, *The Social* 120-21).

In comparison to military and public sector employment, land settlement played a more ambivalent role. In the cultivable areas in the highlands, the British land tax reform and the land settlement that followed successfully tied most cultivators to the newly established state. At the same time, many tribal land claims to uncultivated lands were not formally recognized. Although more land passed into private ownership in the highlands than in Wadi

Araba, significant parts of Busayra were declared state land (e.g., as forest land, *ḥaraj*, reserves of the Ministry of Agriculture or, later on, as protected area). This severely restricted access to these lands by local populations for grazing, firewood collecting, and other activities. In the *bādiya*, even tilled land was not registered under individual names, but formally remained part of the treasury. This means that all of Wadi Araba was declared state-owned property. While formal and informal practices of land distribution allowed for a degree of accommodating tribal spaces within newly asserted state spaces, land settlement has also proven a source of grievance for many in the local populations. It has remained a point of contention and negotiation until today (Bocco, "Espaces étatiques" 147; Lancaster and Lancaster, *People* 25; Palmer et al. 44-45). In spite of this history of expanding public sector employment and land distribution, accounts of the developmental history of these areas also show a considerable amount of neglect or, at best, selective engagement by governing agencies. As Aihwa Ong ("Graduated Sovereignty," *Neoliberalism*) reminds us, sovereignty is fragmented within a nominal nation-state container and never extends evenly across a territory. Actual, spatially graduated strategies of rule reflect which spaces

are considered important or (potentially) productive by governing agencies. In consequence, any given territory may contain multiple forms of socio-spatial sovereignty. These include zones of privilege, where populations deemed core assets to the country's economy train, live and work; refugee camps, which are primarily spaces of discipline and control; as well as "internal colonies of poverty and neglect" (Ong, *Neoliberalism* 84), where neither the territory nor its population are deemed valuable.

For decades, infrastructural and social development in the rural south were largely by-products of other initiatives rather than goals in themselves (Baumgarten 137-43). Wadi Araba had, until recent years, been particularly neglected. It shares a border with Israel and was primarily treated as a security zone well into the 1990s. This designation effectively isolated most of Wadi Araba's inhabitants from the rest of the country. Even though the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA), a governmental regional planning agency established in 1977, was nominally responsible for the development of Wadi Araba, this remote jurisdiction did not receive much attention (e.g., Dajani 1; Tarawneh 7-8). This neglect was mirrored and compounded by the unwillingness of urban practitioners assigned to the area (e.g., as

engineers or doctors) to understand local social dynamics in what they perceived to be a marginal space with harsh living conditions and uneducated people (Bocco, "Ingénieurs-agronomes" 271-75; Tarawneh 10, 102-3).

This marginal position reflects the broader developmental history of the country. In the first place, it was a corollary of the pronounced urban bias that has characterized development strategies since the inception of the state, but which became particularly pronounced during the 1970s. Based not least on the substantial influence of Jordan's businessmen, this bias resulted in the lion's share of industrial investments, government expenditure, services, and infrastructure going to the governorate of Amman (Malkawi; Tell, "The Politics" 90). Moreover, the rural south's peripheralization was an effect of a strategic focus on developing irrigated agriculture in the northern Jordan Valley. This resulted in a governmental neglect of not only other parts of the Jordan Rift Valley, such as Wadi Araba, but also of the rain-fed farming practiced in the highlands around Busayra. Furthermore, the lack of developmental initiatives in the area may have been due to the fact that the local kinship networks were not considered relevant by the political center.[2] Wadi Araba and, to a lesser degree,

Busayra, are thus captured in what Ong describes as "internal colonies of poverty and neglect" (Ong, *Neoliberalism* 84).

This undesirable status is reflected in the areas' poor quality schools and health facilities, as well as in the late arrival of permanent housing, electrification, and piped water (Abu Jaber, Gharaibeh, and Hill 37; Dajani 22, 29; Tarawneh 101-02). Overall service levels in Busayra were slightly better than in Wadi Araba, with a gradual expansion of schools, electricity, health services, transportation, and communication services to accessible villages and towns over the course of the 1970s. This might be due to the earlier establishment of basic infrastructure (such as a road system) and permanent housing in the highlands. However, the quality and accessibility of services were reported as relatively poor, and problems comparable to those mentioned for Wadi Araba were identified. Villages off the main roads, such as Dana, were not even formally included in plans to widen service coverage (Biewers 16; MMRAE and JICA 126-27; ZENID 4).[3] Another indicator of neglect and marginality were the low income levels prevalent in both areas. Indeed, in the late 1980s, Busayra and Wadi Araba were estimated as having the lowest income levels in the country (Jor-

dan Valley Authority 13-14; Ministry of Social Development, pt. 4:31, 89).

The few planned development initiatives registered in both areas did not result from an overall development scheme but were rather instituted piecemeal. They depended on who had an eye for the area at any given moment, and how their initiatives were embedded in broader developmental and political considerations. For example, the establishment of irrigated agriculture in Wadi Araba, which created the major settlement of Graygra in the late 1970s, goes back to a 1970s-era power struggle between two political factions in Amman. One camp wanted to focus rural development strategies on the northern Jordan Valley, the borderland that divides the Jordanian East Bank from the occupied territories in the West Bank. The minority opposing camp saw this as implicitly accepting the normalization of relations with Israel, and thus favored projects that improved farming in the less politically sensitive—and better watered—valleys descending from the Transjordan plateau.[4] Establishing irrigated agriculture in Graygra was a way to appease the leader of the opposition, Sharif Nasser ibn Jamil, who was an uncle of King Hussein and a politically powerful military commander.[5] The project was short-lived, however, as local populations were left to their own devices

after they began to demand a greater share of the profits from their royal patrons. Bereft of equipment or accumulated knowledge about marketing and transportation of the produce, they had to re-establish everything from scratch (e.g., Baumgarten 83-84; Lancaster and Lancaster, *People* 183-84; Tarawneh 106-07).

Such indicators and anecdotes illuminate that the vast majority of inhabitants of southern rural Jordan were hardly privileged recipients of public largesse. While parts of southern Jordan—such as the eastern parts of Maʿan governorate, or the city of Aqaba —were considered relevant at times (e.g., Bocco, "Ingénieurs-Agronomes;" Debruyne), areas such as Busayra and Wadi Araba were clearly marginalized. In spite of the relevance of the military and public sector, social development projects were pursued on an ad-hoc basis. Wadi Araba and Busayra were not considered relevant in a developmental sense for many decades, and remained on the socio-economic and political fringes.

Poverty Alleviation and the Proliferation of Improvement Agencies

This changed with the onset of the poverty alleviation agenda. One of the most notable transformations of the last twenty years, and even more so during the last decade, has been a proliferation of agen-

cies and regulatory bodies charged with poverty alleviation or local development in these areas. This paradigm, which promotes individual or collective entrepreneurial activities in specific localities, gained momentum in Jordan in the context of on-going structural adjustment policies, which brought freezes on public sector employment, the privatization of previously state-owned enterprises, and the decline of real wages. Poverty alleviation and local development policies were, in many ways, introduced to counterbalance the effects of these broader measures and dynamics (Lenner, "Die lokale Übersetzung"). This shift has caused the rural south of Jordan, including Wadi Araba and Busayra to attract much more attention as spaces of improvement.

While there have been various drivers of this transformation, I would like to single out two for discussion. The first is the way in which the sustainable development discourse, which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a hybrid of conservation and development discourses, materialized in Jordan. It was picked up by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and fed into its establishment in 1993 of the Dana Biosphere Reserve, the largest protected area in the country that spans parts of Busayra and Wadi Araba. Heavily funded and infused with expertise by global agencies like the World Bank's Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and USAID, RSCN experimented with different socio-economic projects in and around the reserve that sought to "make conservation pay" for local populations (Irani and Johnson).

Another important moment that channeled attention to Wadi Araba and Busayra was their recent designation as poverty pockets (in 2004/2005 and 2008, respectively). Defined as areas with a poverty rate of more than 25 percent, poverty pockets are a specialized targeting scheme that has attracted the attention of various government as well as donor-funded projects since its inception in 2004 (Lenner, "Poverty"). In this way, the focus on poverty alleviation and local development, which has marked international development interventions since the mid-to late 1990s, has contributed to a re-valuation of these marginalized areas.

While agencies of improvement were already present before the 1990s, they multiplied and diversified in type over the next twenty years. They now run the gamut from regional planning agencies, like JVA and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), to (semi-) governmental agencies like the Hashemite Fund for the Development of the Jordanian Badia, to royal NGOs like RSCN, the Jordan River Foundation (JRF), and the Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD). Additionally, private sector companies like the French Lafarge, which owns most of the nearby, formerly state-run cement factory, engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in and around Busayra. Projects like UNDP-GEF's small grants program, various international NGOs, and a host of donor-funded initiatives interacting with local "partners" complete this list.

Given the diversity of the actors at play, it is perhaps unsurprising that not everybody maintains the same objectives. The various agencies present in Busayra and Wadi Araba pursue a variety of improvement strategies. JRF follows a more activating, participatory methodology that, in theory at least, encourages poor communities to "own" the improvement projects and pull themselves out of poverty by their own bootstraps. Others, such as JVA or ASEZA, are mainly concerned with improving infrastructure. They pursue a top-down approach dominated by an engineering model, which has little conceptual space for input from the target populations. In between are myriad approaches mainly focusing on employment-generation, material benefits, and the charitable provision of the basic necessities of life (housing, food, etc.) to

the poor and needy. So what has really changed? To what degree have these different interventions altered the marginal socio-economic and discursive position of these areas?

Putting People in Their Place

I argue that there is a relative continuity of neglect and marginalization. This partly stems from the dominant poverty alleviation and local development agenda in itself. According to its basic premises, the leveling of socio-spatial inequalities is no longer the responsibility of the state. Claims for inclusion into governmental service provision therefore appear illegitimate, and people in the target areas are made accountable for the success or failure of locally-confined projects of improvement. They are thereby disconnected from broader macro-economic strategies and policies, which remain focused on urban areas (Craig and Porter; High).

This marginalization is furthermore an effect of the way in which interventions operate in practice. By following a number of programs and projects, I have found that more than specific policy goals and approaches, it is their organizational goals, procedures, and contexts that shape the dynamics of poverty alleviation and local development. Geared towards

organizational maintenance and survival, they produce various hierarchies between management and labor or trustees and beneficiaries, even if their interventions nominally seek to achieve the opposite (Mosse, *Cultivating Development* 104; Shrestha 213). These dynamics include the overall administrative structure in which specific agencies find themselves, their relations with other organizations, as well as their internal procedures and interactions with partners or beneficiaries. These produce, often unintentionally, spatial hierarchies and the spatial Othering of those on the receiving end. This turns the populations of the target areas into "locals" and renders their concerns inferior and less valid than those of actors and agencies located on a supposedly higher scale.
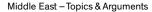
Various dynamics interact to produce this effect. Firstly, intense competition for access to funding, political clout in Amman, and dominance in the field turns the nominal targets of intervention into a secondary concern. Project branding by different improvement agencies concerned with visibility easily subordinates the aim of people's empowerment to that of institutional aggrandizement. Moreover, regulatory blurriness concerning the roles and responsibilities of several sub-national administrative units and

para-statal agencies puts "local" policy-shapers at a loss to distinguish who governs them and to whom they should turn with their concerns.[6] This disorientation also results from governmental as well as non-governmental agencies' lack of transparency regarding their goals, agendas, and budgets.[7]

Adopting standard procedures in project planning and implementation is another organizational dynamic that converts the concerns of target populations into technical problems, making them appear particular and "local." Project managers of agencies like JVA or ASEZA will, when asked about cooperation with local associations, refer to their "standard engineering model" and thereby deflect demands to adapt projects to people's wishes.[8] Yet standard procedures are also pursued by agencies following more "participatory" approaches. Here, participation is limited to particular formats and tends to encompass only specific activities of the implementing organization (Mosse, "People's Knowledge"). Some of these, e.g. the incessant training activities offered by agencies like JRF, are perceived by local associations as not answering to their actual needs.[9]

Furthermore, many agencies pursue what I call the "path of least resistance." Rather than cooperating with place-based orga-

nizations or institutions in target areas directly, donors and government agencies often work through national-level intermediaries, which they perceive as more solid, relevant and reliable.[10] The path of least resistance also includes focusing on highly visible or quickly obtainable interventions rather than those that might be most needed.[11] This often entails working with the strong rather than the poor and marginalized, who might not have the prerequisites to make a project a nominal success.[12] Finally, there are various ways of evading challenges when people are not willing to be put in their place. These include switching local "partners," going it alone entirely, or blocking alternative local initiatives through better connections with governmental or donor organizations.[13] Such strategies are often justified with reference to superior, national, or global interests, such as conservation or the creation of an entrepreneurial mind-set.[14] They are reinforced through culturalizations of the target populations as traditional, uneducated and unwilling to work. The oft-cited "lack of capacities," for example, which so often provides an excuse for intervention, can quickly turn into an explanation for project failure or a reason for exclusion. This allows intervening agencies to avoid questioning the validity of their approaches, and to perpetuate their role as trustees of populations framed as deficient and needing help.

Of course, local(ized) policy-shapers are not devoid of agency. They negotiate and challenge these dynamics, which are always fragile and precarious. Such interactions have raised the status of those individual brokers who have successfully used their connections, knowledge, and linguistic abilities to mediate between target areas and outside agencies. Yet overall, these dynamics serve to put the latter in their place as locals. They reinforce spatial hierarchies by situating "the local" (community) either at the bottom, or as encompassed by broader circles of authority, including "the national" (the state) and the system of nation-states (Ferguson and Gupta; van Aken 7). These dynamics of emplacement, and the organizational forms from which they stem, render target groups and their concerns local and thus inferior to supposedly broader, more encompassing logics of (state and non-state) implementing agencies. They selectively include local dynamics and populations, but also exclude them in many ways.

While the idioms and specific procedures have changed, such discursive and procedural forms of socio-spatial Othering are integral to processes of peripheralization. I argue that such methods of putting people in their place, which often involve images of deficiency and socio-spatial inferiority, constitute a revised and renewed form of peripheralization in the era of the post-Washington consensus and its poverty alleviation agenda.

Conclusion: Re-Fragmenting Government in Rural Jordan

Tracing the trajectories of government and development from the vantage point of two (sub-) districts in rural southern Jordan shows that governmental strategies of improvement never addressed the entirety of the nation or population of Jordan. They were always assembled and fragmented, and their boundaries rarely corresponded to those of the nation state. While processes of state-formation in Wadi Araba and Busayra created lasting relations of dependency on central state agencies and the military there, its inhabitants were not privileged recipients of attention or state largesse. In spite of piecemeal initiatives, they were overlooked by broader development strategies that focused almost entirely on urban areas in the northwest of the country and the northern Jordan Valley. Their neglect was compounded by narratives of backwardness, which kept urbanized professionals from engaging with the concerns of local inhabitants. These areas were thus

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not only marginalized in socio-economic terms, but also discursively Othered. Their recent discovery as areas of planned intervention has only changed this peripheralization to a limited extent. Governing agencies are certainly more interested in these areas than they used to be, not least because they have increasingly been framed as poor areas in need of intervention and "help for self-help." Yet this does not mean that these areas and their inhabitants are somehow less spatially marginalized than they once were. This is partly due to the poverty alleviation agenda in itself, which could be considered another form of neglect as it places the responsibility for exiting poverty on the poor communities themselves. Moreover, it is a consequence of different agencies often pursuing their organizational goals at the expense of their policy goals. Many of the representations and dynamics that result from this prioritization continue to keep local populations in dependent, spatially inferior positions.

Peripheralization can thus still take place in areas that appear to be the focus of governing strategies. The central questions remain: what do these strategies entail and exclude? How do they link socio-economic development strategies in specific marginalized areas with those prevailing at larger scales, or how do they

decouple the former from the latter? One needs to also consider the production of spatial hierarchies in the daily operations of development in specific target areas. These procedural and discursive forms of socio-spatial Othering need to be integrated more strongly into conceptualizations of peripheralization, and thereby make possible more fine-grained analyses of such processes in past and present. These two cases from different ecological and social contexts in rural Jordan show that peripheralization depends more on these overriding dynamics than on specific contexts. These dynamics have interacted with legacies of socio-spatial Othering in Busayra and Wadi Araba to perpetuate processes of peripheralization in spite of new governmental attention. Local populations, which have been excluded from dominant strategies of development for decades, remain dependent on trustees because they find it difficult to engage in currently fashionable projects of development without the requisite knowledge or training. This makes it possible for agencies to maintain their positions as trustees, thereby upholding their raison d'être. At the same time, at a broader level, these dynamics reaffirm the urban bias of the dominant socio-economic strategies pursued for decades. Treating poverty as a problem

confined within certain geographic areas, and populations as responsible for their own improvement, decouples them from this broader political economy. This upholds the privileged status of those (businessmen and investors) who benefit from the urban bias.

I thus argue that current forms of emplacement constitute relative continuity with previous decades of neglect, despite the fact that the specific modes of intervention have changed in many cases. Neglect and emplacement have thus taken on different appearances over the years as they have been re-embedded into evolving governmental strategies and formations, but each new iteration is merely the next step in a continual process of re-fragmentation in the government of the social.

Notes

[1] In ecological terms, the term *bādiya* refers to arid and semi-arid areas with less than 200 mm of rainfall per year. Socio-culturally speaking, the *bādiya* is inhabited by the Bedouin (in Arabic the two words have the same root). According to common estimates, the *bādiya* makes up more than 80 percent of the territory of Jordan (Bocco and Chatelard; "Jordan Badia").

[2] This is not least due to their small size, the troubled relation of some with the authorities, and the fact that others were latecomers to the area and were not officially counted among the Bedouin tribes (personal communication with Prof. Riccardo Bocco, Geneva University, Dec. 2013).

[3] Personal communication with an elderly inhabitant of Qadisiya, Apr. 2011.

[4] The segment of Israel's border that is adjacent to Wadi Araba is not in dispute, as opposed to the border separating Jordan from the West Bank farther north.

[5] Personal communication with Dr. Tariq Tall, American University of Beirut, Dec. 2013.

[6] E.g., personal communication with mayor and staff of municipality in Wadi Araba, Oct. 2009.

[7] The lack of transparency was highlighted by local policy-shapers with regard to the main initiatives in both Wadi Araba and Busayra (e.g., personal communication with an employee of the Local Development Unit of municipality in Wadi Araba, Apr. 2012, and personal communication with different CBO representatives in Dana, Dec. 2009, Mar. 2010, Sept. 2011).

[8] E.g., personal communication with the director of Wadi Araba Development Unit, ASEZA, Oct. 2009.

[9] E.g., personal communication with a member of the Local Development Unit of municipality in Wadi Araba, Apr. 2012, and personal communication with a CBO member in Dana, Sept. 2013.

[10] Personal communication with an USAID officer in Amman, Aug. 2009.

[11] Personal communication with an RSCN manager in Amman, Dec. 2009.

[12] E.g., personal communication with a JRF manager in Amman, Sept. 2011, and personal communication with a member of the Local Development Unit of municipality in Wadi Araba, Apr. 2012.

[13] Personal communication with various CBO members in Dana, Qadisiya, and Graygra, Mar. 2010, Apr. 2010, Sept. 2011, and personal communication with an RSCN manager in Amman, Dec. 2009.

[14] Personal communication with an RSCN community liaison officer in Dana, Sept. 2011, and personal communication with a JRF manager in Amman, Apr. 2010.

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A Periphery Becomes a Center? Shopping Malls as Symbols of Modernity in Iraqi Kurdistan

Schluwa Sama

Being labelled and framed as a remote periphery of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is transforming since 2003 into a center attracting investments worth billions of dollars. Investigating this transformation, I scrutinize one of the visible outcomes of the investments, namely shopping malls, as examples and symbols of "modernity" and "progress." The recently built shopping malls are thereby analyzed as the built materialization and symbols of neoliberal transformation and socio-economic change. Engaging with representatives of shopping malls as well as with the experiences of young female shopping-mall-goers, it will be illustrated how modernity and progress is framed within the Kurdish nationalist narrative and how this is taken up by young Kurdish female mall-goers. Thus, it will be contended that a historical narrative of past sufferings comes to legitimize the new liberal "freedoms" that are available through the full connection to and participation of Iraqi Kurdistan in the capitalist economic world system.

Keywords: Periphery; Neoliberalism; Iraqi Kurdistan; Gender Relations; Space; Shopping Malls

Since the fall of the Iraqi Baʿth regime in 2003, Iraqi Kurdistan has witnessed an economic boom. Obvious manifestations of this neoliberal transformation are apparent in the rapid changes of the urban landscapes of Kurdish cities like Dohuk, Sulaimaniya and especially Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish region: shopping malls, gated communities, newly built luxury hotels, and "Western-style" bars and cafés have come to dominate the urban landscape. While metropolitan central spaces are thus emerging, this has to be understood in the historical context of Iraqi Kurdistan, which was until recently framed as a remote and peripheral region within Iraq (e.g. Natali; Stansfield). Studies that have specifically addressed peripheralization processes in Iraqi Kurdistan are rare, but Andrea Fischer-Tahir and Arian Mahzouni have engaged with peripheralization on a local level. Mahzouni analyzes the effects and causes of the widening gap between the "urban core" and the "rural periphery" in Iraqi Kurdistan while Fischer-Tahir highlights the different ways that the district of Qaradagh has become dependent on Sulaimaniya and thus has been produced as the periphery of the latter.

In this paper, I will focus on a global scale, outlining the transformation of Iraqi Kurdistan from a remote periphery into a

center attracting US$39 billion of investment (RUDAW), mostly apparent in the construction sector and the production of spaces of affluence and exclusivity. Thus, I will specifically scrutinize shopping malls as symbols and the built materialization of "modernity" and exclusivity that embody the merging of a neoliberal ideology of success with a Kurdish nationalist narrative.

I will take on an ethnographic perspective[1] on shopping malls in order to understand the transformations taking place in people's everyday life, and will specifically address the following questions: How do representatives of shopping malls in Kurdistan refer to shopping malls? How are these newly emerging places incorporated into people's everyday life, and what meaning do malls acquire in the lives of especially female Iraqi Kurdish shopping-mall-goers? How are shopping malls "produced" in a Lefebvrian sense and what do they symbolize in the context of Iraqi Kurdistan?

Focusing on these questions, I undertook four months of intensive ethnographic field research, from March to June 2014, which was the basis for my master thesis, titled "Subjectivity and Space: Shopping Malls in Iraqi Kurdistan." I conducted interviews with representatives of shopping malls—mainly representatives of Mazi Mall

in Dohuk and Majidi Mall in Erbil—and I also interviewed Iraqi Kurdish female mall-goers. For most of the intimate information, I relied on my female family members in Dohuk. In addition, I engaged in participant observations and informal conversations with mall-goers and shopping mall representatives while also incorporating everyday life conversations into this study. Having adapted an ethnographic methodology in order to capture people's everyday life, it is philosopher Henri Lefebvre who emphasized the importance of the subject and the everyday life to understand the production of space in its entirety.[2] It is thus his theoretical insight that will underpin this analysis of the production of malls in Iraqi Kurdistan.

A Lefebvrian Approach

Engaging with the aforementioned questions during my research, I understand the production of shopping malls in Iraqi Kurdistan to be founded on the production of peripheries. These peripheries might be geographically locatable in the rural areas of Kurdistan, or Nepal and Bangladesh, where most of the cheap labor in Iraqi Kurdistan comes from. Peripheries are also produced within certain parts of the city of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniya, or even in a disguised form in the shopping malls themselves, such as

through the presence of foreign cheap labor in the mall, for example. As has been pointed out by Fischer-Tahir and Naumann, the construction of centers and peripheries results from the same process of an uneven capitalist investment policy that favors certain spaces over others: "Peripheralization refers to a spatially organized inequality of power relations and access to material and symbolic goods that constructs and perpetuates the precedence of the centers over areas that are marginalized" (14).

Understanding peripheralization as part of the production of social injustice that is produced through economic, social and discursive transformations, the three-dimensional theory of Lefebvre will serve as a fruitful concept to grasp and analyze the production of shopping malls. Lefebvre's idea of space is based on a triad of moments in which space is (re-) produced. While keeping in mind that it is an analytical division rather than a division mirrored by social reality, I will focus on the analysis of the production of *lived* and *conceived* space of malls. To *conceive* or think about space requires the production of knowledge on a certain space and thus, the production of space itself. *Conceived* space therefore is part of what Foucault defined as discourses and what Lefebvre calls the "dominant space in any

society (or mode of production)" (39) and more precisely:

> Representations of space: conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. (38-39)

These representations of space, e.g. *conceived* space, are tied to the relations of production (33) and the knowledge that is thereby reproduced. Drawing on Gramsci's term of hegemony, Lefebvre clearly states the existing "connection between knowledge (savoir) and power" (10). Framing *conceived* space as the dominant space of representation, Lefebvre implies that lived space might be a counter space, as it is the "subject," the individual, the ordinary "user" of space and his/her experiences that are at the heart of any analysis. *Lived* space then is

> … space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' …. This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. (39)

However, keeping in mind the three-dimensionality of Lefebvre's idea, one needs to be cautious not to overemphasize an antagonistic relation of "dominant" and "dominated" space. The material production of space, namely *perceived* space (38) is the third moment of the production of space that renders a possible antagonism obsolete. Addressing *lived* space, it is more fruitful to take a closer look at the way "users" render this space into a "lived" space through "making symbolic use of its objects" (39). So, it is the meaning-making processes of ordinary "users" that will be the focus of the analysis of *lived* space.

As much as Lefebvre notes every society's distinct mode of production (31), he accordingly stresses the "historical period" (27) for the analysis of the production of space. Thereby, he highlights the importance of each society's specificities and distinctness with regard to socio-economic and historical characteristics. Accordingly, I will present the recent socio-economic history of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Socio-Economic Transformations in Iraqi Kurdistan

It is widely acknowledged in academia that the US-led intervention in 2003 brought a series of neoliberal policies to Iraq that was implemented through the Coalition Provisional Authority led by Paul

Bremer (Tripp; Dodge). These policies "… seemed to be opening up Iraq to a free-for-all of economic opportunity, in which Iraqis themselves could only play a minor role" (Tripp 289-90).

Central developments before 1991 cannot be discussed at appropriate length here; however, the years of war, especially, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and the targeted aggressions of the central Iraqi government that deprived Iraqi Kurds of their livelihood need to be noted as crucial developments that have had long-term effects for today's politics (Yildiz 68). One of the most gruesome acts of violence committed by the former Iraqi regime was the Anfal campaign in 1988 that culminated in the chemical gas attacks on Halabja (Mlodoch 64). Anfal is to the present day inscribed into the Kurdish narrative of past sufferings and thereby also instrumentalized by various Kurdish parties for different Kurdish nationalist purposes (Watts, "Role of Symbolic Capital" 73).

In 1991, a no-fly zone was established that ultimately led to the withdrawal of the Iraqi army from Iraqi Kurdistan. Following this, a UN economic embargo was implemented which paved the way for the start of a humanitarian aid regime, including international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) that met the basic needs of the local population. In addition to the

general UN sanction regime against Iraq, Saddam Hussein imposed an internal embargo on the Northern Kurdish provinces, which meant that in the "relief phase" financial resources were scarce and the control of these resources became ever more contested. One of the most lucrative businesses was the trade in petrol products at the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing in Zakho. Leezenberg notes how "… the petrol trade was increasingly 'privatized': in a sense it replaced the state supplies of oil to the north, at far greater cost to the local population" ("Iraqi Kurdistan" 638). Furthermore, these economic developments and lack of resources were also a crucial factor contributing to the next war, namely the civil war between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) from 1994 until 1998 (638). Among the reasons for the end of the militia war was the Oil-for-Food programme (OFFP) implemented in 1997. Thirteen percent of the revenues were set to be sent to the Kurdish region. Although this marked an important point of change towards better living conditions, the sanctions regime was still ongoing and an aid regime continued that undermined a self-sufficient economy (639-40). The start of the OFFP thus marked a shift towards a broader reconstruction effort of Iraqi Kurdistan.

However, this remained "within a neoliberal framework" where "entrepreneurial classes" emerged and a "more diversified workforce" (Natali 148) developed.

Consequently, at the end of the OFFP came the gradual neoliberalization of Iraqi Kurdistan: for the Iraqi state and specifically for Iraqi Kurdistan, the political parties were divorced from their responsibility to provide for society. The basic provision of society was rather done by an established humanitarian aid regime. On a political level the aid regime also contributed to the emergence of a Kurdish region more and more separate from Iraq. Gradual support of the Kurdish region and the idea of a Kurdish nation through an international Western aid regime was an emerging trend at this point, and this development was further carried on through different business players and Western campaigns in 2003.

After 2003: "Kurdistan Is Open for Business"[3]

With the US-led invasion of Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan could declare its own autonomous status, thereby also enhancing its own "international legitimacy and internal sovereignty" (Natali xxvi). This was further institutionalized in the Iraqi constitution, lending greater recognition to the Kurdish region. In 2006, the PUK and KDP also

decided to formally merge into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). This alliance enabled them to "share the spoils of lucrative construction, business, and petrol-related contracts" (Watts, "Democracy" 146). This arrangement was further institutionalized after 2003 when the KRG had enough international recognition to actively pursue a policy where attracting foreign direct investment became a top priority. Denise Natali frames this policy as a "developmental strategy [that] focuses on private sector growth" and is "underpinned by Kurdish nationalist priorities" (86). It is important to note from these developments that the changing economic conditions not only led to the emergence of a Kurdish quasi-state, but also transformed Kurdish nationalism, a development that will be discussed further in this work. Feeding into the Western view of an undemocratic authoritarian Middle East, Kurdish nationalist elites redefined "democraticness" as a key feature of Kurdish identity, as pointed out by Nicole Watts: "The 'democratic-ness' of Kurds has been one of many factors used to juxtapose Kurds and Kurdish identity against Arabs, in particular" ("Democracy" 148).

"We Love Kurdistan and That Is Why … It Is Secure": Transforming Kurdish Nationalism to Build Malls

In late April, 2014, HEWA Group[4] had a stand promoting new housing opportunities to Majidi Mall visitors close to the entrance. As I approached the stand with a male German friend, we were greeted in English. After asking in Kurdish what this stand was about, the employee continued in English. After talking about what HEWA Group, the owners of Majidi Mall, were promoting, we expressed our astonishment at this fast development of construction:

Me: Wow, this is a really fast construction process.

HEWA Group representative: Yes. Kurdistan is developing very fast. People say it is becoming the new Dubai. And I would say we would be even better than Dubai. I mean the people of Dubai are also very ambitious and they did a lot for their country and built a lot. But you know the weather over there is not that good…you cannot walk outside. But Kurdistan also has beautiful nature…so we have a lot and we are building all this. So we are proud of our development and Kurdistan is secure.

Friend: Why do you think that Kurdistan is so secure?

HEWA Group representative: Well, because we love Kurdistan and that is why. The middle and south of Iraq is not so secure but here it is secure and that is the most important thing: security. Let me give you this leaflet. It has some more information on it and you can also visit our website.[5]
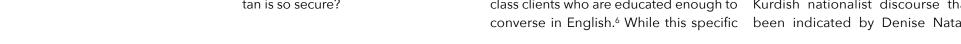
This short encounter with a representative of HEWA Group captures and illustrates many of the complex levels of the ways in which malls and also housing opportunities are represented within the Kurdish discourse. As will be further shown, "development" in this encounter is equated to impressive construction projects like malls, amusement parks and gated communities. At the same time, as illustrated in the above conversation, this is merged with a local sentiment of Kurdish nationalism: the newly built construction projects embody the Kurdish capability for "modern progress" not only to the Kurds but, maybe more importantly, to potential Western investors. One of the most apparent aspects of this was the fact that the representative of HEWA Group led the whole conversation in very good English. Not only does this indicate the internationality of the whole housing project, it also shows who the target group is: upper-class clients who are educated enough to converse in English.[6] While this specific role of the English language is also clear in other contexts, it is obvious that speaking English in the mall is naturalized, thereby creating it as an international space where Western or non-Kurdish costumers will be comfortable directly speaking English. During my observations, this atmosphere differed drastically from what I experienced in the bazaar, where Kurdish is the first language spoken and where people only rarely speak English.[7]

In this conversation, the HEWA Group representative linked economic boom and architectural development to Kurdish nationalism. According to him, "Kurdistan is so successful and is not subjected to the violence in the rest of Iraq because Kurds are good patriots who love their country." What remains unsaid but implicit in his message is that the rest of Iraq is insecure because of Arabs' lack of love for their country and their incapability of being modern people embracing success.

This is an important aspect of the remaking and transforming of Kurdish nationalism that is linked to the investments of foreign companies in Iraq. In Lefebvrian terms, this neoliberal Kurdish nationalism is the broader discursive context enabling the *conceived production* of the mall. The gradual transformation of a Kurdish nationalist discourse that has been indicated by Denise Natali and

Nicole Watts and brought forward earlier in this text is increasingly entangled with the concrete business interests of foreign elites. Aiming at investments from mostly Western European and American companies, the regional Kurdish elite is in need of presenting itself as the modern and secular force of the Middle East. The change in self-presentation of Kurdish leaders is thus fuelled by Western business and entrepreneurial elites. The Other Iraq campaign[8] is illustrative of convincing Western companies of the "modern Kurdish working environment" that stands in contrast to the ways in which Iraq is portrayed as a country of chaos and violence in the media. The "othering" of Arabs might be found in classical Kurdish nationalist discourses before 2003, yet the ways in which this is now linked to Western business interests is an emerging tendency. Magazines such as the *Kurdistan Investment Guide*, an official publication by the Kurdistan Regional Government in collaboration with Western scientists and business partners, is exemplary for promotions that display the ways that business interests are merged with Kurdish nationalist sentiments, one example being a Forbes & Manhattan advertisement in the *Kurdistan Investment Guide* 70 (2011), that portrays a child's face painted over in a Kurdish flag and is sub-

titled: "PROUD TO INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF KURDISTAN."

As important as Western European and American companies and business partners are, more immediate and regional models of success that Kurdish people relate to are countries such as the UAE and Turkey.[9] This is illustrated by the following tour that I took in Mazi Mall in Dohuk with Niaz on April 16, 2014. Niaz, who introduced herself as a representative for the mall, explained to me the important function of the mall in Kurdish:[10]

> Me: So could you tell me something about the building of this mall?
> Niaz: So this mall is very new and was just opened a few weeks ago. We also did not open everything. The owner is Haji Meshhud. He also built Dream City and the Mazi Supermarket in Dohuk. So this is all part of his project. In this mall we have only international brands. We opened this mall for them. Our contracts are only 4-5 years long and we do not have much to do with the shops. Only, with some of the shops, like for example Swiss Watch [while we are walking by that shop], we have contracts in which they grant us 10 percent of their profits.

Before I met Niaz, I had heard the name Haji Meshhud from my family. They informed me that Haji Meshhud is well-

known in Dohuk. He was once, probably in the period of the 1990s, a rather poor street vendor, but made a quick career within the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Asking how they knew this, they said that this is common knowledge in Dohuk. He is supposed to be among the KDP elite, with good contacts to the Turkish business elite. Niaz did not talk much about what or who Haji Meshhud is but referred quite naturally to the fact that Haji Meshhud is "the owner" of Mazi Mall and "built Dream City and Mazi Supermarket" in Dohuk. That Haji Meshhud did not actually "build" the mall but rather planned and managed the construction process of these malls became quite clear. However, the workers who actually built these malls remain unmentioned and thus out of people's consciousness.

Describing the mall as an international and modern space is framed through a security discourse: expensive international products not only need the modern space of the mall but also specific security concepts. Thus, the security staff in the mall is legitimized as a way to safeguard expensive Western products, thereby contributing to a safe and harmonious environment, as Niaz explains:

> Me: Isn't Kurdistan safe enough? Why do you need security within the mall?
> Niaz: Yes of course it is. But with these

international brands or stores selling gold [walking by a shop that sells gold], there needs to be a special security staff for the sake of safety. This is done by a Turkish company.

Irrespective of the "logic and correctness" of her argumentation, a comparison with a different Kurdish shopping context, namely the bazaar, that has no private security even though expensive goods such as gold are sold, illuminates the ways in which the consumption of international goods is linked to a "modern" shopping experience. Suffice it to conclude here that the need for shopping malls to sell international products contributes to the production of the shopping experience as a profoundly modern, Western and exceptional experience. This experience cannot be obtained in the narrow alleys of the bazaar, and the bazaar is incorporated rather differently into the neoliberal project of modernizing Iraqi Kurdistan: namely as the authentic place of Kurdish culture.[11]

It is not only the exclusive high quality products from expensive Western brands on offer that quite obviously contribute to the malls' image as Western, modern places. It is also the explicit intentions and vision of the architects and mall planers to promote the mall as a space that is planned and designed according to foreign ideas:

Niaz: A Turkish architect designed the mall according to foreign standards. As you can see, on the ground floor we also have a space for exhibitions. So artists can also exhibit their products.

Emphasizing the presence of foreign designers and international brands in the mall, Niaz is also explicit about her idea of the mall as a positive step forward and ultimately as the space of modernity:

Me: Do you think that the mall could be a danger to the bazaar? That in the end, we will not have bazaars anymore?

Niaz: No, I don't think so. We need more of these malls and modern new centers to move forward. In the past, I always had to go to Erbil for shopping. And now I am here. Dohuk has its own mall. We actually had a lot of people who asked us when the mall will be finally opened. I was personally asked so many times. People need this. If they want to take a break, they come here. At nights, this mall is full of people.

The way in which Niaz sees the mall as a new opportunity for people to enjoy, amuse themselves or take a break from their everyday lives is quite characteristic of the broader way that the mall management *conceives* of the mall and presents it as a space of modernity and symbol of progress. This conception of the malls is an important part of producing the mall in its entirety in the context of Iraqi Kurdistan. It has become clear how notions of "progress," "development" and "modernity" become enmeshed with Kurdish nationalist identities on a conceptual level. Following up on this, it is crucial to investigate how these notions are taken up and *lived* through performances and practices within the mall.

Inside the Mall

Delving into the lived production of the mall, in the following I will describe a scene of family members and myself inside Mazi Mall in Dohuk:

Once inside the mall, my friends decided to take a walk. This meant that we started from the entrance and went from shop to shop, walking into the shops that were appealing to my friends. Appealing could mean that the prices were thought to be acceptable or because they had "great clothes."

Getting started was different from the bazaar. In practice, trips to the bazaar would be much more target-oriented. Nesrin and Perwin knew what they needed and they told their mother in advance. And at the bazaar, we would go directly to shops that we knew rather than starting a random walk-around. Also, in discussion

and talks, I was told that for the bazaar it is better to take someone who knows his/her way around. And so, the purpose of the mall was rather to walk around. Choosing the mall as a space "to go out," the intention of enjoying oneself was further demonstrated by another factor: taking photos.

Nearly everywhere in the mall, we would take photos of ourselves, in front of shops or within the shops. This was not uncommon among the other shopping mall visitors. Taking photos in Kurdistan as well as in other places happened to mark a special event. It meant to deem an action, thing or place worth enough to make a picture in order to hold on to that moment. Being dressed-up and/or on a trip to nature with family/friends, school or university ceremonies, weddings, etc. were usually moments that were worth taking a picture. However, it did not occur in the everyday life while wearing pyjamas or when going to the bazaar. Taking photos at the mall made the shopping mall experience very exclusive. It produced the mall as a valuable, special place to be. It was an event that had to be remembered. On another level, taking photos of oneself within the mall was part of the performance of a modern Self. In this sense, the production of the mall and people's Selves as modern and upper-class is part

of a reciprocal relationship. Similar to the way in which Kurdishness had been *conceived* earlier as comprising "progressiveness" and economic success (symbolized through the ability to build imposing architecture), this is how a new Kurdish Self is actually *lived* in and through the mall, thereby producing the mall as a modern space.

We entered a shoe shop at the mall where Nesrin saw a pair of shoes she very much liked. She tried them on and expressed her admiration and love for the shoes. Her friends gathered around her while she was wearing the shoes and looking at them from the mirror. Everyone, me included, expressed that the shoes did indeed fit her. However, no one suggested that she should buy the shoes. Instead, her cousin told her that she should not leave any of her wishes unfulfilled (lit. do not leave anything inside your heart). "You try them and make a photo of yourself. You can look at it all the time." The girls did not buy the clothes but rather tried them on to make photos of themselves. This was repeated several times. In another shop, Nesrin and Perwin made photos of themselves with differently colored hats on.

This performance might indeed happen in other contexts and countries; however, the Kurdish historical context lends its specificity to the performances of young

Kurdish female mall-goers. Having outlined the decades of war, sanctions and the discourse of the "historical Kurdish suffering," this context needs to be taken into consideration. In the Kurdish context, within my observations and conversations, the fact that especially an older generation could not fulfil so many of their dreams and had lived a life of scarcity was also ingrained into younger generations' narratives of the past. The insistence of Nesrin's friend to not leave her wishes unfulfilled must be understood in this historical context. Thus, it is stated that today it is not necessary to suppress one's wishes anymore, especially when being in a shopping mall. Consequently, it is a history of suffering and abundance that is partly legitimizing a new type of freedom that enables Iraqi Kurdistan, exemplified through its shopping malls and mall-goers, to present itself as part of the modern capitalist world system.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have outlined how shopping malls in Iraqi Kurdistan are designated as symbols of "modernity" and the drastic socio-economic change of the region. Not only geographically a peripheral region of the Iraqi state but also economically, socially and culturally produced as the periphery of Iraq, the Kurdistan

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Region is developing into a center of investment to Iraq, if not the entire Middle East. Theoretically underpinned by Lefebvre's concept of conceived space, it has been shown how malls are *conceived* as symbols of Kurdish success. "Kurds love Kurdistan," as has been said by the HEWA Group representative, and thus Kurdistan is safe and deserves liberty and the joy of shopping malls. Consequently, they have "earned" their right to be part of the modern, capitalist world system much in contrast to the Arabs of Iraq. This neoliberal Kurdish nationalism then also feeds into the desires of young female mall-goers who produce the mall, in Lefebvrian terms, as a *lived space* when they present themselves as "modern" and as finally part of the Western world.

Notes

[1] For insight on ethnographic methodology, I follow Atkinson, Hammersley, Przyborski, and Wohlrab-Sahr .

[2] Ronneberger explains that "… the declared goal of his intellectual project was, above all a 'revalorization' and the quest for spaces that allow for autonomy and creativity" (135).

[3] Speech of former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani at an international trade show in Sulaimaniya (qtd. in Natali 86).

[4] HEWA Group Holding is a company in Iraqi Kurdistan that, among other projects, owns and manages Majidi Mall.

[5] The talk was about 5-10 minutes long and was entirely in English despite my initial questions in Kurdish. It continued in English talking about the specific prices of the new houses and how to purchase a flat or house.

[6] Interestingly, the homepage (*hewa.com*) is available only in English while the flyer that I received was in Arabic.

[7] Of course there might be instances where shop owners at the bazaar speak English or German. There were, for example, some Kurds who returned from Germany and were able to speak German.

[8] The campaign is visible on the website *theotheriraq.com*.

[9] See also Fischer-Tahir and Dulz 10-12.

[10] Niaz talked to me in Bahdini-Kurmanji Kurdish, the prevalent dialect in Dohuk. I translated this myself into English.

[11] As I cannot refer in more detail to the bazaar, I have outlined parts of this process in "The Proud Neoliberalisation of Iraqi-Kurdistan."

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CLOSE UP

#05–2015

Frantz Fanon: The Empowerment of the Periphery

Rachid Ouaissa

The current fascination with Fanon and his ultimate relevance can be explained by the convergence of the problems of colonialism, space and the subject-formation, which outlines Fanon's oeuvre. Fanon's understanding of space as a special form of domination has come to influence the debate on periphery, both on the global and local level. Fanon analyzed everyday racism as a geopolitical colonization, as an alienating spatial relation and treated colonization as spatial organization. This article seeks to provide a political biography of Frantz Fanon, by shedding light on how he has influenced the current debate on peripheries and further attempts to demonstrate Fanon's relevance in the era of globalization.

Keywords: Space; Alienation; Violence; Revolution; Colonialism; Globalization

Frantz Fanon: The Empowerment of the Periphery

In his foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Homi Bhabha describes globalization as a new form of colonialism. For Bhabha, both colonialism and globalization are characterized by dualities producing similar mechanisms of reification, marginalization and dehumanization of peoples. Colonialism spread on behalf of the *mission civilisatrice*, globalization in the name of democratization (Bhabha xi). According to Bhabha "it is the reproduction of dual, unequal economies as effects of globalisation that render poorer societies more vulnerable to the 'culture of conditionality'" (xii-xiii). Global duality should be put in the historical context of Fanon's founding insight into the "'geographical configuration' of colonial governance, his celebrated description of the compartmentalized structure of colonial society" (xii).

In fact, the world system today is a divided world as described by Fanon: "divided in two, is inhabited by different species" (5). While today's dualisms and mechanisms of domination have undergone discursive changes through such terms like "global South" and "global North," inequalities between the peripheries and the center have not lessened 50 years after Fanon's death. The so called, globalization, with its

new forms of domination and exploitation under the auspices of the IMF and World Bank as well as the speculative economy, drives masses towards a kind of chronic marginality, promoting the emergence of violent peripheries.

With his two classics, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon's understanding of space as a special form of domination has come to influence the debate on periphery, both on the global and local level.

In addition to the debate on peripheries on the global level, and related to the intensification of globalization, Fanon also influenced the discussion on urban geography and the formation of marginalized spaces within urban centers. His analyses of everyday racism and the rise of Manichean cities are still an appropriate tool for interpreting power relations and the rise of violence in megacities. For Mota-Lopes, "this way of reading Fanon sees him as an important if not indispensable reference to our present understanding of world-historical social reality—in particular the unequal, structural interrelationship between core and periphery" (45).

This article seeks to provide a political biography of Frantz Fanon, attempts to shed light on how he has influenced the current debate on peripheries and further attempts to demonstrate Fanon's timeliness in the era of globalization.

Biography[1]

Frantz Fanon was born in 1924 into a middle-class family on the Caribbean island of Martinique, where he completed his schooling. One of his teachers was the Afro-Caribbean writer and politician, Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), whose idea of *Négritude*[2] is considered to have influenced Fanon greatly. During the Second World War, Fanon joined the struggle against the Axis powers, enlisting in the Free France Forces, and served in a tank division in North Africa. Meanwhile, in a training camp in Morocco, he encountered the deeply ingrained racism rife within the French army. Disillusioned, he saw that a "white" and "Christian" soldier was preferentially treated, while the rest of the soldiers in the same battalion were regarded as nothing more than cannon fodder. Fanon experienced that the real world is divided into the world of the "white man" and that of the "black man." The discrimination and forms of racism he encountered served as the templates for his first work *Black Skin, White Masks*, published in Lyon in 1952.

Following his schooling in Martinique, Fanon studied medicine and philosophy in Lyon. After graduating in 1953, he was appointed the director of a psychiatric clinic in the city of Blida in central Algeria, one year before the outbreak of the Algerian War. In Algeria, he discovered a world of violence and repression. His experience of racism in France found its expression in outright acts of violence in Algeria. As a psychiatrist and doctor, he was confronted with the firmly established "École psychiatrique d'Alger" of Antoine Porot (1876-1965), who had developed a theory on indigenous people, characterizing them, allegedly trapped in the constraints of their own culture, as primitive, incapable of progress and violent. However for Fanon, it was colonialism that was responsible for the latent aggression and unrestrained violence, and he believed it was furthermore responsible for the psychological disorders leading to, via alienation, depersonalization.

As the Algerians resorted to armed resistance, Fanon maintained contact with the leadership of the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*). In December 1956, he submitted his resignation as doctor in charge of the psychiatry unit. In his resignation letter, he wrote that it would be an absurd desire to cure people who experience systematic dehumanization on a day-to-day basis (Cherki 135). After a stay in Paris, Fanon moved to Tunis, where he came into contact with the entire leadership of

the FLN. Here, he also joined the editorial team of the FLN newspaper, *El Moudjahid,* and represented the Provisional Government of Algeria at many international congresses and diplomatic missions. In 1960, Fanon was diagnosed with leukemia. He died on December 6, 1961, at a hospital in Maryland, United States. In accordance with his own wishes, his body was brought back to Algeria (Zerguini 170-72), where he was buried with full military honors in an already liberated part of the country close to the Tunisian border. Fanon's engagement in the FLN's struggle against French colonialism was the empirical basis for his most famous work *The Wretched of the Earth.*

After his death, Fanon's work was analyzed around the world and in each instance was approached with a different set of questions and specific contexts. As early as the 1960s, he became, similar to Che Guevara, a symbol and icon of the "Third World" in its struggle against colonialism. Fanon's work not only contains analyses of decolonization and repression but also reflections on the futures of "Third World" countries. It furthermore expresses the hope that a new humanity will arise, parallel to a decolonization of the human existence. After its translation into English, Fanon's work attracted such interest in the USA that, in the mid-1960s,

veritable "fan" groups and reading circles emerged. Cherki described the reception of Fanon amongst Afro-Americans as follows: "Even if it wasn't read by everyone, *The Wretched of the Earth* became a Little Red Book or Bible—as the case may be—for black Americans" (277). Fanon became compulsory reading for political activists of the Black Power Movement and the Black Panther Party. In Africa, Latin America and Asia, Fanon's work is not only examined in connection with colonialism, but is also referenced in struggles against internal repression and marginalization. Besides revolutionary movements, leftist groups, and marginalized minorities, Fanon's thoughts are also quoted, instrumentalized and claimed by dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, for instance the Baath regime und supporters of pan-Arabism.

In the 1960s academia, Fanon's work foreshadowed development theories like neo-colonialism, dependencia and world system theories and inspired various theorists in this field. Thus, Wallerstein writes: "Fanon represented for me the expression of the insistence by those disenfranchised by the modern world system that they have a voice, a vision, and a claim not merely to justice but to intellectual evaluation" (xxii). Fanon's analysis of "the pitfalls of national consciousness," a cri-

tique of the post-colonial urban elite, helped to propel Wallerstein in the direction of a world systems perspective (Goldfrank 157).

In the 1990s, Fanon was rediscovered with the rise of postcolonial and cultural studies. In Anglo-American discussions, a Fanon revival is seen among those identified with the poststructuralist school, in theories of space, in urban geography, in gender theory and in critiques of neoliberalism. Fanon thereby almost becomes a hallmark of the various "post-"discourses. Fanon uses Marxist theory, psychology, critical race theory, and global political economy in order to give an account of the colonized subject, the problem of nationalism, and the path to liberation. In his work, Fanon combines the ideas of the young Marx and Hegelian dialectics looking for a homogeneous revolutionary group or class, driven by the desire to forge an emancipatory universal subject of liberation (Wolter).

Often stigmatized as a glorifier of violence (Arendt 20, 69), Fanon saw the violence of the indigenous members of the periphery as a response to the varieties of violence stemming from the colonial master— physical, psychological, structural and cultural. Fanon wished to hold up a mirror to the Europeans, and he hoped to remind Europe's intellectuals and citizens of their

complicity in the atrocities of colonialism. As Judith Butler has put it: "Fanon's work gives the European man a chance to know himself, and so to engage in that pursuit of self-knowledge, based upon an examination of his shared practices, that is proper to the philosophical foundations of human life" (216).

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said suggests that Fanon was influenced by Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) (326-30). Similar to Lukács, Fanon considers violence as an act of mental will that aims to overcome reification. Said describes Fanon's idea of violence as "a cleansing force" that allows for "an epistemological revolution" (327).

Unlike the young Marx, who identified the proletariat as a class that would liberate itself from labor through empowerment, in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon focuses on peasants as revolutionary subjects and violence as the instrument to achieve liberation. Under the prevailing conditions of colonialism, there would be no labor much less a proletariat. Therefore, neither class struggle led by an avant-garde-party nor trade-unionisms provide means for overcoming oppression. Instead, the colonized subjects can only "empower" themselves by resorting to violence. For Fanon, violence is labor and the militant ready to use violence is a worker:

> For the colonized, this violence represents the absolute praxis. The militant therefore is one who works. … To work means to work towards the death of the colonist. Claiming responsibility for the violence also allows those members of the group who have strayed or have been outlawed to come back, to retake their place and be reintegrated. Violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. This praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end. (44)

Fanon saw violence as the only means by which the colonized could liberate themselves from the master-slave relations. At first, violence should erupt spontaneously and should then be canalized to forge a common consciousness in the struggle for a national identity (51).

Here, Fanon takes up an aspect of the leftist-revolutionary tradition since Marx, namely to identify a socially coherent group which, emerging out of a historically specific situation of extreme deprivation, becomes the avant-garde of the revolution. Excluded from sharing the wealth of a society and its political processes, but characterized just as much by a certain degree of homogeneity, such a group, whether being Marx's proletariat or Fanon's "wretched," can turn relations of domination upside down. This is due to the group's strength in numbers, its organizational skills and its propagation of a cogent ideology with the ability to mobilize the masses.

Fanon questioned the possibility of development under the condition of global capitalism. For Fanon "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World" (58), but the wealth of the center also belongs to the periphery. Because reversing the system of domination was seen as impossible within the existing structures of global capitalism, and in order to achieve total independence, violent revolution and a global distribution of wealth were the only means for driving out oppressive neocolonial forces from the world. Like Samir Amin and André Gunder Frank, Fanon saw the role of the native bourgeoisie very critically. This comprador bourgeoisie, which took power in the periphery after independence, would not be able to guide the free peoples into "development" and "modernity." Fanon accused this class of collaborating with the colonial power to ensure that the interests of both would continue to be met after the declaration of formal political independence. Therefore, this comprador bourgeoisie serves the

interests of the center rather than those of the indigenous peoples. Structurally speaking, the postcolonial era is thus a continuation of the colonial era. In the words of Fanon:

> The national bourgeoisie, which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime, is an underdeveloped bourgeoisie. Its economic clout is practically zero, and in any case, no way commensurate with that of its metropolitan counterpart which it intends replacing. In its willful narcissism, the national bourgeoisie has lulled itself into thinking that it can supplant the metropolitan bourgeoisie to its own advantage. … The national bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries is not geared to production, invention, creation, or work. All its energy is channeled into intermediary activities. Networking and scheming seem to be its underlying vocation. The national bourgeoisie has the psychology of a businessman, not that of a captain of industry. (98)

Fanon and the Center-Periphery Dialectic
Fanon's notion of space and periphery are directly related to colonialism:

> Since colonialism is about the expropriation of space it is immediately political. Addressing the politics of space, Fanon challenged the newly independent nations to deal with the legacies of colonialism by redistributing land and decentralizing political power, vertically and horizontally. (Gibson 227)

For Fanon, the relationship between the center and the periphery is not just characterized by a geographical division but first and foremost by unequal power relations that also reflect socio-economic realities. In the words of Lefebvre, "space and the politics of space 'express' social relationships and react against them" (15). With his analysis of everyday racism as a geopolitical colonization, Fanon understood colonialism as a spatial relation. As Kipfer remarks:

> Fanon analyzed everyday racism as an alienating spatial relation, treated colonization as spatial organization, and viewed decolonization in part as a form of reappropriating and transforming spatial relations in the colonial city and through the construction of nationwide sociospatial alliances. (701)

Likewise, Henri Lefebvre's theories of everyday life, urbanization, the production of spaces and everyday colonization in postwar France seem to be inspired by the Fanonian Manichean colonial city (701). Similar to Fanon, Lefebvre considers colonialism "not only as a historical era of territorial expansion but more generally as the role of the political authority in reproducing relations of production and domination through the territorial organization of relationships of centre and periphery" (720). For Fanon the colonial city gave rise to a new urban formation which he calls "the Manichean city," in which racial, national and economic differences are separated und hierarchized (Varma 10). This structured space leads to intensive alienation and to the formation of revolutionary subjects:

> In fact the insurrection, which starts in the rural areas, is introduced into the towns by that fraction of the peasantry blocked at the urban periphery, those who still have not found a single bone to gnaw in the colonial system. These men, forced off the family land by the growing population in the countryside and by colonial expropriation, circle the towns tirelessly, hoping that one day or another they will be let in. It is among these masses, in the people of the shanty towns and in the lumpenproletariat that the insurrection will find its urban spearhead. The lumpenproletariat, this cohort of starving men, divorced from tribe and clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people. (Fanon 80-81)

Thus Fanon combines the concept of space with the formation of the

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revolutionary subject. The structural relations between periphery and center forge a common consciousness and lead to violent revolts. Put differently, the relationship between the center and the periphery is ultimately tantamount to that between master and slave. But, as it is subject to Hegelian dialectic logic, it also breeds the development of a new self-consciousness.

In the new era of globalization the key aim of using Fanon's revolutionary model is to explain the persistent and deepening inequality that shapes relations between the North and South, or core and periphery. The structure of the world system has remained the same since fifty years.

In the megacities, neoliberalism magnified the parallel worlds described by Fanon. In cities like Cairo, Istanbul and Ankara, "modern" and "traditional" ways of life and forms of consumerism exist side by side. Shopping malls and department stores, streets full of music venues, and barricaded noble suburbs for the new rich are present in every major city in the world, most especially in the Near and Middle East.

The increasing divide between developed capitalist countries and the periphery, capitalist globalization and new forms of economic, political, and cultural domination, partly inherited from colonization, makes the Fanonian commitment against the enslavement of peoples more relevant today than ever. That is, given a globalization dominated by neoliberalism, Fanonian theory can be deemed a suitable approach, an intellectual weapon so to speak, to antagonize the resurgence of colonial ideology. And indeed, to many activists in the anti-globalization's movements, Fanon is the initiator of a revolutionary project that must be defended and reflected on in the ongoing era of globalization.

The current fascination with Fanon and his ultimate timeliness can be explained by the convergence of the problems of colonialism, space and the subject-formation, which outlines Fanon's oeuvre. Fanon provides a masterful account of the necessity and the difficulty, but also the possibility of liberation from these structural constraints. However, the question remains whether or not the Fanonian solution of violent revolts, which shall overcome the modern forms of alienation on the local and global level, is still relevant.

Notes

[1] This outline of Fanon's life has already been covered in Pannewick and Khalil 105-22.

[2] *Négritude* is both a literary and ideological philosophy, which seeks to encourage a common racial identity for black Africans worldwide. As a historical term, it designates a strategy mapped out in order to oppose French colonialism.

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OFF-TOPIC

Performing Immobility in Contemporary Palestinian Theatre

Irene Fernandez Ramos

After the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), Palestine has witnessed the consolidation of a closure regime that limits the freedom of movement of its population. This system has located Palestine in a marginal position within the global patterns of mobility and has had an impact on internal social dynamics and in artistic representation. Theatre can portray, represent and challenge this process of immobilization. Through the analysis of the play *Confinement*, produced by Al-Harah in 2010, this paper will analyze how theatre can open new spaces of representation that allow alternative narratives within the intricate panorama of the Israeli occupation.

Keywords: Theatre; Palestine; Immobility; Space; Margins.

Introduction

From the signature of the Oslo Accords (1993-1995) and the outbreak of the second Intifada (2000), the Palestinian population has been increasingly subject to the consolidation of a closure regime that materializes itself through different means: an increasingly complicated bureaucratic system of permits, a network of segregated roads, the segregation barrier and the system of check-points. These restrictions have naturally had an impact on individual and collective identity and its representation. The present article explores how what I call the "dynamics of immobility" locate Palestine in a marginal position, marked by the exclusion from the patterns of global mobility, the impact of the Israeli occupation and the disruption of Palestinian socio-political life.

At the same time, insofar as the margins are defined not as opposed to the center, but as alternative places of Otherness, I want to argue that the Palestinian position on the margins enables the articulation of different narratives to represent and counter the intricate power dynamics at stake in the Palestinian context. Within that context, art, and more specifically, theatre, enables an open space for social dialogue. This article will analyze *Confinement*, a play produced by the Palestinian theatre group Al-Harah in 2010, in order

to understand how the process of meaning creation that involves audience and performers during the theatrical event has a strong potential not only to represent the Palestinian marginal position, but also to foster the collective re-negotiation of identity narratives.

Palestine as a 'Place of Otherness:' The Dynamics of Immobility

During the last 66 years, Israeli policies have combined the creation of a sophisticated system of physical barriers, such as the Wall and the check-points, a regime of administrative curtails (Brown 504) and the establishment of settlements inside the 1967 "Green Line" that appropriate more Palestinian land and reduce Palestinian territories to an ensemble of "gated communities" (Bowman 129). These structures are directed to establish a system of movement restrictions that pushes Palestinian reality to a position in which Palestine becomes a "place of Otherness" (Hetherington viii). The consideration of Palestine as an 'Other' locates it on a marginal, "unbounded and blurred space-between rather than the easily identified space at the edge" (27-28).

In this sense, the Palestinian context cannot be understood in binary terms (center vs. margins); it is not a question of being outside or inside a certain pattern of global mobility, nor of being outside or inside a certain social space. Rather, the Palestinian context is conditioned by multiple dynamics that are intimately connected—namely its exclusion from the context of international globalization, the repressive character of Israeli occupation and the complex internal dynamics within Palestinian society—and which determine its marginal position. The movement restrictions imposed on the Palestinian population have created a complex panorama that fuses "displacement and return, absence and presence, movement and confinement" (Kelly 26). This panorama is not only determined by physical exclusion, but mainly by an entangled network of social, cultural, psychological and political variants that have consolidated a generally immobile scene.

Immobility can be understood as opposed to the notion of mobility, which has become a keyword in the analysis of new socio-political, economic and cultural patterns within the current context of globalization (Soja; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry; Tawil-Souri; Baldassar and Merla). Urry refers to this recent phenomenon as a mobility turn to point out how "all social entities […] presuppose many different forms of actual and potential movement" (*Mobilities* 6). At the same time, Cresswell defined movement as "mobility abstracted from contexts of power" (2), from which we can infer that mobility is movement that is concretized within contexts of power. This means that mobility is translated into fluxes of people, objects, capital and information (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 1) that are imbued with complex dynamics and interrelations, and therefore it can be seen as a phenomenon both geographical and social (Urry, *Sociology* 3).

Paradoxically, as stated by Leuenberger, within this time of rapid globalization, a contradictory trend can be witnessed: "the proliferation of walls, barriers and fences" (64). These barriers do not necessarily need to be physical, as socio-economic, geographical, cultural and political factors can also curtail access to this global mobility. In this sense, mobility is linked to power dynamics within geographical and social space. This intrinsic inequality in access to mobility has been defined as a mobility gap (Shamir 200) which needs to be acknowledged in order to recognize that globalization entails "processes of closure, entrapment, and containment" (199) which can "weaken social capital and generate social exclusion" (Larsen, Axhausen, and Urry 20). Palestinian history is a good example of the impact of differentiated mobility (Massey 150) as an exclusionary pattern based on the unequal access to mobility,

which pushes Palestine to a marginal position. For instance, highly mobile subjects, such as refugees, find themselves with a restricted freedom of movement due to other socio-economic and political reasons than those which caused the initial displacement (Jeffers 64). Indeed, forced migration has been a fundamental part of Palestine's history during the 20th century, and the question of the Palestinian refugees is not only political; it is also a social issue that, as highlighted by Bowker, has a central relevance for broader Palestinian identity narratives. The Nakba marked the beginning of more than 65 years of endless conflict (Kramer 323) and precipitated the forced eviction of more than 750,000 people, who sought refuge in the neighboring Arab countries and in other areas of Mandatory Palestine.

However, exile was only one of the geo-demographical strategies of Israel that shaped the current situation: the Oslo Accords deepened the patterns of differentiated mobility (Falah 1357; Hanafi 112), creating what I call an "extensive sense of immobility" that pervades not only Palestinian everyday life but also the aesthetic representation of Palestinian reality. The spatial confinement and movement regulations have infiltrated every daily action, which has had a strong impact on the individual and collective construction of iden-

tity. In this sense, the position of marginality that those patterns of immobility impose over Palestinian reality allows spaces for "alternate ordering" (Hetherington viii), where alternative narratives shaped by resistance and transgression are formed. Theatre, as a form of art based on space and bodies, has a very strong potential as a place for community dialogue and the development of new narratives of resistance.

Palestinian Theatre as a Space for Altering Orders

The potential of theatre relies on its definition as one of the liminal places of otherness that allows immobility to become visual, dynamic and at the same time real and denied. The theatrical stage opens a representational space as "the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre 39) in which immobility can be represented. The intricate dynamics of the Palestinian context are therefore represented as interweaving within the different dimensions of theatre spatiality. Consequentially, the bodies of the performers can be consciously immobilized as an aesthetic choice whenever theatre allows an infinite range of possible movements.

An example of that kind of aesthetic choice is the play *Confinement*, produced in 2010 by the Palestinian theatre group Al-Harah ("The Neighborhood") based in Beit Jala. The synopsis of the play states:

> Three people find themselves confined. Their souls, hearts and minds are tangled. Their lives become a mixture of madness and silence. They lose their target and their roots.
> They discover that this confinement is only an illusion or a trick or an expression of fear and distress.
> Will this discovery change their attitude towards life?

The play was directed by Raeda Ghazaleh and inspired by a play of the same name originally produced in the 1970s by the Palestinian group Dababis, in which three people find themselves stuck in a bottle. The creative crew from Al-Harah adapted it to the present situation with the financial support of the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts (SADA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The action unfolds as two actors and one actress wake up in a three-meter-diameter round stage that represents the inside of a bottle. The play does not want to question why they are there; it is mainly focused on the consequences—both individual and collective—that the enclosure has for the three of them.

At first glance, *Confinement* illustrates the sense of immobility through its scenographic arrangements: the round non-proscenium stage is demarcated by a circle of light and empty glass bottles as it reproduces the inside of a bottle in which the three characters are confined. The audience sits down around the stage and the "line" between audience and performers is eliminated (Wortham 51). This kind of central staging—also called arena or theatre-in-the-round—constitutes an "architecture of intimacy" (Kaplan 114). The close interaction with the audience challenges performers' safeness at the edge of the hidden spaces and the backstage. There is neither front nor back; everything is seen, there is no comfort area, no possible escape. In this sense, central staging in *Confinement* recreates what Bowman calls "encystation" (295): the performers are enclosed within the space of the stage in the same way Palestinian communities find themselves encircled by the wall or disconnected from their neighboring communities.

The context of closure will always strongly influence the process of meaning creation. "The operations of stage are applied to existing spaces of representation" (Schmidt 286) and, therefore, the different layers of theatre spatiality cannot be analyzed without including in the equation the socio-cultural context that stands beyond the walls of the theatre (Tompkins 538). *Confinement* draws a parallel between the Palestinian reality and the actions of the performers; the representation of personal experiences on stage allows the members of the audience to "confront ambiguous issues in their own lives" (Meisiek 802). In this sense, just as "listening, […] speaking and seeing, happens in specific physical situations" (Shepherd 8), the theatrical process of meaning creation is strongly determined by social and moral values, but, at the same time, it allows those values to be challenged and subverted. Theatre becomes, then, a place for negotiation—a contemporary agora where the body is a tool for social dialogue. This negotiation is inscribed in a wider code of social norms that are translated into daily life through physical techniques that are learnt and defined in terms of morals and "manners" (Goffman 24). Within the Palestinian context, the representation of immobility is not only relevant because of the presentation on stage of the individual experiences related to it; it is also significant in terms of the construction of a common meaning for this 'immobility,' drawing upon the individual-collective experience of the audience. The present article wants to assert the relevance of the aesthetics of Palestinian theatre as a medium for understanding the complicated socio-political dynamics that intervene in that context. As stated by Lola Frost, aesthetic interventions are political "because they disrupt the accepted order of things" (435). I argue that it is within that possibility of disruption that the aesthetic expression articulates its agency, as we can see in the case of Al-Harah's *Confinement*.

Theatre Audiences and Social Dialogue

As we have seen, it is paramount to include the socio-cultural context that stands beyond the walls of the theatre (Tompkins 538) in the analysis of the different layers of theatre spatiality. On the one hand, the translation of this spatial reality into theatre necessarily reflects the social and physical dynamics linked to certain power structures. On the other hand, theatre can destabilize official meaning, which in the Palestinian case allows not only for the construction of a spatial counter-narrative to the Israeli geographical primacy, but also for an open critique of social issues within Palestinian society.

Audiences are paramount in the process of meaning creation, as they are in charge of connecting the witnessed reality on stage with the individual-collective experience of every member of the audience. In

Al-Harah's *Confinement*, the central staging breaks the distance between performer and audience but does not constitute any ease or comfort for the audience. On the contrary, it seeks to foster the "activation of the audience" (Büdel 288). Some parts of the theatrical action may be lost to some portions of the audience because of perspective limitations. The spectators will have to experience the unease of striving to have a full picture, which is indeed an impossible task. In my opinion, what could be seen as a loss of the theatrical illusion due to the physical proximity performer-audience (Cole 19) fosters instead the reaction of the audience and has a strong impact in the process of meaning creation. *Confinement* plays with the audience, pulling and pushing them within its "alienation effect" (Brecht 130). This alienation is created by means of a contradictory theatrical language: on the one hand, the play portrays typical everyday gestures and movements that create the spectator's identification with the characters, while at the same time the characters shift their profound internal dialogues into expansive and impish games that suddenly outpace the audience. The overall tone of the play is waving and changing, proposing an abstract code to the audience in which the connections between the gestural sign, the reference to the everyday world

and the overall meaning of the play are recurrently deconstructed. In this sense, in the same way as Brecht—who defends a theatre where the spectator does not identify with the characters (Silberman, Giles, and Kuhn 5)—in *Confinement* the audience senses distance rather than empathy, which affects the process of meaning creation as the iconical communication becomes meaningful after "a process of reconstruction and symbolization/stylization" (Pavis and Biller-Lappin 68). However, the scenographic arrangements can trigger different unconscious reactions in the audience that are then reinforced by the actual message articulated by the text and the movement in the process of collective meaning creation. In this sense, *Confinement* wants to foster reflection about the sense of the characters' confinement and the role of society in that confinement through different highly symbolic scenes. For instance, the third scene begins when one of the actors starts wandering around, painfully pulling his legs with his hands while he repeats: "I'm carrying my four walls and walking with them."[1] A square inside the circular stage is drawn by a light beam as the rest of the stage and the audience are left in semi-darkness. This scene was inspired by Ghassan Kanafani's short story ʿAṭash ("Thirst"), first published in Kanafani's 1961

first short story collection *Mawt Sarīr Raqam 12* ("Death in Bed Number 12"). It narrates the story of a depressed man who lives an undesired and downcast—yet passively accepted—life confined within the four walls of his apartment.

In the foreword of the short story, republished in 2013, Alex Taylor states that:

> At the time Kanafani wrote this story, […] it may have seemed that Palestinians were, lost in a sense, with nothing else to do except tell others how they have been wronged. Today, though Palestinian activism is strong, the search for dignity depicted in Kanafani's "Thirst" remains as poignant as ever. (34)

The search for dignity stems from a profound sense of estrangement of the self, within which an individual recognizes that he/she has become a stranger both to himself/herself and within the society. "To carry four walls" does not entail that these four walls are mobile, but that they are inside him; they are carried and limit his individual freedom. The walls that are carried are the boundaries between him and a world that imposes the toil of permanently dealing with social norms and its translation into self-constraint.

According to Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*, the essence of life is the "feeling of participation in a flowing onward" (xvi).

The patterns of Palestinian *immobility* confine the population within the margins of the global connections and international aid system, the Israeli colonial project, and the Palestinian national project in which socio-political, economic or cultural participation has little room for autonomous development. The Oslo Accords "dealt a heavy blow to Palestinian national unity and effectively ruptured Palestinian national consensus" (Ibrahim 61). The breach was not spontaneous; it responded to the focus of Palestinian nationalist elites on the construction of a Palestinian nation-state on the basis of a homogeneous Palestinian identity formulated upon ideas of authenticity, tradition and fixed notions of gender and religious affiliation. To achieve this homogeneity, the official discourses appropriate individual experience in the interest of a "master narrative of identity" (Hammack 13) that perpetuates a solid set of power relations.

Confinement presents the effects of this intricate power matrix to the audience. Furthermore, it reflects how the restrictions that follow these power structures can result in the burden of fitting into social standards of tolerableness. The play translates these structures and the denial of social distance into a denial of physical space which is "inscribed in bodies" (Bourdieu 17). This strategy can be seen in the fourth scene, which starts when the three actors shake and wave from one side of the stage to the other as if the bottle were being shaken. They cannot control the chaotic force that pulls and pushes them as if they were little insects, and eventually their movements inside the bottle become a linear and monotonous movement similar to military marching. They line up, keep their gaze lost on the horizon and mark a repetitious pattern accompanied by string music that seems to chaotically follow the movement.
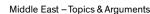
One at the time, the performers go out of the linear movement imposed by this marching queue and face the other two performers who remained in the queue with simple and functional movements— plugging their ears, laughing out loud, rolling up their trousers—that challenge the ruling movement. The marching represents the order established by social norms that are challenged by the discordant movements. However, what is interesting here is not only the dynamic of challenging the dominant movement, but mainly the fact that, one after the other, the performers come back to the ruling movement by themselves. This pattern of submission and self-constraint illustrate what Nabil Al-Raee—artistic director of *The Freedom Theatre*, a renowned Palestinian theatre from the refugee camp of Jenin whose founder Juliano Mer-Khamis was assassinated on the 4th of April 2011– stated in an interview with Patricia Davis:[2] "One of the most important things the occupation has succeeded in doing is to kill hope, to shut down the mind, and to kill the imagination. You can't dream. You have a limit."

In *Confinement* the audience is confronted with this image of how coercion and fear are not enough to 'colonize' the mind of the actor, and, as stated by Dascal, there has to be an unconscious acceptance of that set of beliefs. In this sense, this scene is a reflection of the immobilizing and confining power of social rules and norms. The scene ends when one of the actors steps out of the queue and does not accept the pressure of the others. Instead of coming back to the queue, he says: "F: If I go from here they say why from here, and if I go from there they say why he goes from there?"

This sentence illustrates the permanent sense of inadequacy to social norms and the social pressure they are subject to. The textual binary structure "If I … they say …; if I … they say …" is then articulated as repeated and intermingled monologues by the other characters, not as an exchange, but rather as a linear discourse about the role of social pressure in the meaning of their confinement. As stated

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by the director, Raeda Ghazaleh, the audience laughed out loud in this scene, in which "nobody would think they would laugh."[3] This reaction reflects two different trends: on the one hand, the audience feels a certain degree of familiarity and identifies with the experience presented on stage. On the other hand, they recognize the absurdity of some of these constraints when represented on stage, following the Brechtian style that I mentioned above. In any case, the audience is urged to think about the wider sense of that confinement and to connect the space that they have in front of them with both individual anxiety and social constraints. In this sense, the aesthetic choice of representing the lack of movement in a graphic and uncanny way shows Al-Harah's interest in provoking a reaction from the audience that will open a dialogical space where resistant narratives can be articulated.

Final Remarks

The play finishes without any apparent conclusion. This absence is not innocent; in the same way that the play does not ask any direct question about the nature of performers' confinement, it does not pretend to offer any response. *Confinement* confronts the audience with an aestheticization of the lack of movement that is present in their daily lives while at the same time applying a Brechtian strategy to distance them from it. In this sense, theatre opens a place of Otherness similar to the one in which the different Palestinian contexts have been confined due to the context of the Israeli occupation. The limitations that social rules impose over individuals and that are represented in *Confinement* are inscribed into a wider narrative of disciplinary restrictions—the political context of occupation and the global patterns of neoliberal mobility—which again denies the binary division of centre vs. margins.

The technologies of the occupation applied in Palestine represent a "ritual of exclusion" (Ozguc 6) which aims at demarcating and rendering invisible an important segment of the Palestinian population. Palestinian *immobility* cannot be understood in territorial terms, as it refers to the "structures and hierarchies of power and position by race, gender, age and class" (Tesfahuney 501). The structures of power that articulate that "ritual of exclusion" are constitutive of both Israel's colonial project and of the structures of power within Palestinian society. Both curtail the population's freedom of choice over their lives and have an impact on individual and collective construction of identity, which is a dynamic process that pervades the artistic scene.

Theatre represents an interstitial space for social negotiation that reflects the interconnected dimensions of Palestinian complexities. In this sense, the representation of *immobility* in the Palestinian context is not at all a denial of the possibility of development and change within Palestinian society. On the contrary, as it has been stated before, *immobility* should be understood as a notion that goes beyond the mere lack of movement and which points out the lack of freedom to choose one's movements due to the restraining power dynamics that are linked to the context of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Not only does theatrical space allow messages of political resistance against these power dynamics; it also challenges "the processes of representation itself, even though it must carry out this project by means of representation" (Carlson 142). Following this idea, Palestinian theatre becomes a new space of alterity in which realities different from the socially constructed realm that lies outside the walls of the theatre are allowed. If we allow theatre to be a space for practice, it will offer a space in which bodies can freely renegotiate time and identity in a time of increasing anxiety over a panorama of ever-increasing restrictions.

Notes

[1] The translation of the original Arabic text presented in this article was provided by Al-Harah in March 2014.

[2] For further details, see <http://howlround.com/death-and-art-in-palestine-nabil-al-ra-ee-and-the-freedom-theatre#sthash.ltWQrl1g.dpuf>.

[3] Skype communication with theatre director Raeda Ghazaleh, Aug. 21 2014.

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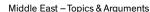
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"But They Can't Manage to Silence Us:" Mahjoub Sharif's Prison Poem "A Homesick Sparrow" (1990) as Resistance to Political Confinement

Enrico Ille

This article discusses the poem "A Homesick Sparrow" by the Sudanese poet Mahjoub Sharif (1948-2014) in the frame of recent cultural policies in Sudan. The poem was written in 1990, one year after the military coup that brought the present regime to power, while the poet was imprisoned together with others regarded as oppositionists to the new Islamist government. It reflects not only a specific, critical positioning against contemporary political events, but can be read in the context of a long-term, often harsh nego-tiation of the modalities of public appearances and utterances in Sudan. In this sense, the poetic language and the way it was brought outside the prison walls are understood here as a performative act of political resistance against governmental attempts of peripheralization vis-à-vis cultural policies aiming at homogenization and centralization through political Islam.

Keywords: Sudanese Poetry; Cultural Policy; Political Islam; Public Spaces; Political Prisoners.

Introduction[1]

On 30 June 1989, a military coup in Sudan brought a regime under Omar Al-Bashir to power, which publically displayed itself as a nationalist revolution empowering Islamic state-building. However, under this umbrella the regime established struc-tures of domination, building on an eco-nomic-political network protected by mil-itant security forces.[2]

One of the first steps after the coup was the wide-ranging arrest of potential oppo-sitionists to the new rulers. Among them was the poet and teacher Mahjoub Sharif. His imprisonment was brought to some international attention when Amnesty International, Africa Watch and BBC's *Pris-oners of Consciousness* series took up his case at the beginning of the 1990s.[3] Not only for his poems, but also for his politi-cal views associated with the Sudanese Communist Party, Mahjoub Sharif was imprisoned in August 1989 and sus-pended from his work as a teacher in accordance with the far-reaching removal of oppositionists from public service "for the public good" (*lil-ṣāliḥ al-ᶜām*), as the new regime called it.

Mahjoub Sharif was born around 1950 in a rural area of the Gezira region east of the Nile.[4] Early in his childhood, he experi-enced both, rustic life during his primary school education and urban surroundings

in Omdurman, where his family engaged in petty trade. Instead of following this profession, he entered the Maridi Institute for Teachers in Khartoum and remained a primary school teacher for most of his professional career. His creative methods of teaching Arabic are among the things most remembered by those who knew him during those years. But the periods when he could be active as teacher were cut short by repeated imprisonments, which started in 1971, two years after Colonel Jaafar Nimeiri took power through a military coup, toppled only in 1985 by a popular uprising.

Mahjoub Sharif, still a young man at that point, initially hailed the coup as a possible alternative to the stagnant bickering of the old-established parties that were built on authoritarian models of religious leadership and had failed to establish a working democracy in the years before. However, the violent nature of the new regime soon caused him to change his position completely, and already in 1971 he reminded in a poem that "[b]ullets aren't the seed of life" (qtd. in Africa Watch).

In the following three decades, political imprisonment became a common reaction to his poetic creations, closely connected to his social and political activism; up to 1996 he was incarcerated ten times for periods ranging between a few months to three years. In addition, he was frequently forbidden to work in public service, both under Nimeiri and under Al-Bashir, while the latter regime restricted his mobility to the capital, Khartoum, until 1998. The performance of his poetry in public media is subject to selective censorship up to now, although some musicians continue to defiantly make the point of performing songs based on his forbidden poems in their concerts, while some poems and songs became an integral part of Sudanese popular culture.

It is this translation of political criticism and defiance against censorship into the creation, performance and distribution of poetry that is the focus of the following article. Its central argument is that the prison poetry of Mahjoub Sharif is not just an expression of a will to resist political oppression, but that the circumstances of its creation and distribution made it a performative act of political resistance and political communication. At the same time, the poetry's aesthetic characteristics can be seen not only as a functional tool for such an act of defiance; they also carried, to its own end, emotional content that was formed by the same circumstances. This prison poetry is therefore neither merely social commentary, nor merely intentional political communication, nor merely intellectual and aesthetic reflection of a state of mind in prison. Its subsequently rich connotations provide a fruitful entry point into a wider analysis of socio-political and cultural history, as it both reflects and reaches beyond the condition of confinement.

Several studies of prison writing have moved beyond accepting the institution "prison" as the only relevant context and focused on the relation of "inward/outward." While an "anthropology of prisons" can attempt to engage with the inner life of this institution (Rhodes), the harsh marking of societal boundaries intended by its establishment can also be scrutinized with a look at the consequences of a failure to have the intended effect. In political imprisonment, related to the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate political action, inducing such a failure can be seen as an act of political resistance, which questions both the coercive effectiveness and the righteousness of the institution.

By focusing on an incarcerated writer whose artistic work was continued, not started, in prison, this article relates to a number of works on political prison literature that combine aesthetic aspects of such literature with issues of human rights (Wu), literary documentation (Elimelekh) and intellectuals' involvement in political conflicts (Cooke; Sakr).

In this direction, Abou-bakr noted that "[t]he political prisoner […] is often preoccupied with continuing the struggle inside the prison and with sustaining communication with the world outside", but the "act of communication might be blurred by the absence of a reader" (261). Furthermore, the exceptional reality of imprisonment may lead to a kind of writing "against what the audience is familiar with as characterizing mainstream discourse" (262). In the case presented here, however, the success in finding an immediate receptive audience in prison mates and even among the prison's staff is argued to constitute an act of political resistance that includes more than the single poet himself, and subsequently also left the prison walls. Rather than just declaring the writer an "anti-hero," who rejects a differentiation between himself and "the people" suffering outside the prison (285), performance and distribution of poetry, both oral and written, will be shown to place the poet into a pro-active process of political communication that does not strive for an anti-language, but, on the contrary, for colloquial intelligibility. In this sense, the poem discussed here is an example of an artistic production which took place inside a prison and directly relates behavior and relations inside this institution with the societal developments outside it.

A Homesick Sparrow[5]

When Mahjoub Sharif was arrested, his family was not officially informed about where he was taken. After two years, the family was allowed to visit him in a prison in Port Sudan. They had already learned that he spent these years in different prisons, the first of which was Kober Prison in Khartoum North, then Suakin in eastern Sudan, and finally Port Sudan on the Red Sea. Friends who had been released, and sympathetic guards who had visited the family on their vacations provided this information.

When the family stayed in Port Sudan with relatives and friends, they heard new poems—some set to music—which Mahjoub Sharif had created during these two years, among them a poem called *Al-aṣfūr al-ḥanīn* ("A Homesick Sparrow"), written in Suakin in 1990. Suakin, much more isolated than Khartoum North and Port Sudan, is very hot and humid, and the prison was built on an elevated spot that concentrated both the heat and humidity in the cells, added to by swarms of flies and bats. It had been previously closed for sanitary reasons, but was reopened by the new regime, whose prisoners had filled all other prisons. The prisoners were sleeping on the ground, surrounded by dust and the dirt of animals. In this situation, the poem was created in form of a letter to those outside:[6]

A homesick sparrow,
Perches on the heart's window;
With longing eyes,
It cranes out to glance at the houses,
At the distant skies,
Waiting for a cheerful morning,
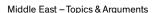With promises laden,

1 رك عصفور الحنبن
2 في شبابيك الفؤاد
3 حنّ تاوق للبيوت
4 للسماوات البعاد
5 الصباح طالع رباح

To land like a turban,	عمه في كتف البلاد 6
On the shoulder of the homeland.	كلما عسعس بيان 7
With each coup in a dark abyss we plunge,	عسكرو حول النشيد 8
The heavy-footed junta besiege our songs,	عكرو صفو المداد 9
They agitate our inkpot, confiscate its internal peace.	سممو النبع السعيد 10
They poison the cheerful spring,	كممو كل الجهات 11
And place their muzzles on everything.	فصدو الحلم الجميل 12
What a pleasant dream they disfigure,	في عيون الأمهات 13
In the eyes of each mother.	نحن كل المستحيل 14
But they can't manage to silence us. Never.	يجبرونا علي السكات 15
In their cells we sip,	نشرب الصبر الجميل 16
The perseverance syrup,	في زنازينهم ثبات 17
To remain bold and steadfast.	يا مشاوير السجون 18
O my times in incarceration	يا تباريح الحنين 19
O my pain of longing and torment,	لو شفيت منك بكون 20
If I lose touch with you,	في زمان القهر مين 21
Who, in this time of coercion, would I be?	لو شفيت منك بخون 22
If I lose touch with you I will betray	الصغار القادمين 23
The little ones yet to come,	لو شفيت منك طغيت 24
If I lose touch with you,	أو بقيت إنسان ضنين 25
Conceited and self-centered I will become.	طالما في الحلق صوت 26
So long as I have a voice in my chords,	ياتو سجن و ياتو موت 27
What prison—or even death—can silence me?	لا و لا لن نستكين 28
No. We will never succumb.	إنهم لايملكون 29
They have no say	أن نكون أو لا نكون 30
In our destiny. No they don't.	

We are the ones who bring life	نحن صتاع الحياه 31
To the dead pores of dormancy.	في مسامات السكون 32
O my sweetheart,	يا حبيبة قلبي يا 33
My life partner,	يا رفيقة دربي يا 34
In the high regards I will always keep you.	يا الحبيبه الما بتهون 35
O my beloved daughters,	يا البنيات الهناك 36
Nestled in the shade of the kind people.	في ضرا الشعب الحنون 37
O the luminous space in the eye range:	يا مساحات الضياء 38
Warm me up with your peaceful greetings,	في مسافات العيون 39
With your letters.	زملوني بالسلام 40
Give my greetings to my peers;	دثروني بالخطاب 41
Give my greetings to the clouds;	سلمولي علي الصحاب 42
Give my greetings to the earth;	سلمولي علي السحاب 43
Give my greetings to the crowds;	سلمولي علي التراب 44
And to the words of romance,	سلمولي علي الزحام 45
In the notebooks of the youth.	سلمولي علي الغرام 46
	في كراريس الشباب 47

Interpretation

The addressees of this letter are related in multiple ways to its composer, both on a societal and on an individual level. The letter starts with an image (lines 1-6), a view out of the prison window that is deeply entrenched with the inner life (fuʿād) of the prisoner, longing for and belonging to both private dwellings (houses) and a widely shared homeland (bilād), for which hopes and visions are far from being achieved ("distant skies"). In the lyrical imagery, the fulfilment of these hopes is symbolized by a "cheerful morning," whose dawn is likened to a turban, a long shawl widely used as a headgear, its end resting easily on the homeland's shoulder, a frequently used allusion to Sudan's mountains and the banks of the White and the Blue Nile.

After this image, drawn in ellipses, a we/they dichotomy is introduced, earlier in the translation than in the original (line 14). The perpetrators in this dichotomy are shown as repeatedly striking militant force that puts limitations and obstacles to free expression, represented by singing and writing. Expressions of joy are silenced, aspirations are negated, and dreams for a better future, here seen through mothers' eyes, are diminished. This attempt at censorship and prohibition is defied by a "we," the voice of protest, confined but

patient and outspoken. As opposed to the wider content of "we" in the lines before, which encompassed all affected by the military dictatorships, the grouping seems now concentrated inside the prison, where struggle is the uniting element and "beautiful patience" *(al-ṣabr al-jamīl)*, freely translated as "perseverance syrup," is a drink shared by the inmates. At the same time, the implied close relation between political confinement inside and outside the prison dissolves and defies this difference.[8]

Rather cherishing than devaluing imprisonment, a further part (lines 18-27) addresses, after an assumed future release, the time of detention as an intrinsic part of an "I," whose social responsibility to speak out is closely connected to it and not limited to the present generation, but also the "little ones still to come." Mahjoub Sharif represents this period here as a moral reminder that the challenge of the right to public presence and public speech should not be seen as threatened, but confirmed and strengthened by this period.[9]

The return to the dichotomy of we/they (lines 28-32) carries the refusal not only of submission, but of any kind of leader or ownership over "our" lives by those who claim both. The stress of liveliness coming from "us" also implies, through the antag-

onistic construction, an aura of death surrounding "them." This central invocation of an antagonistic grouping is made deliberately clear and unmasked. Being intended for wide distribution and mobilization, the avoidance of heavy symbolism and the straightforward, colloquial wording in the poem's central parts aim to facilitate an audience that counters the deliberate attempts to limit public appearance of 'unauthorized' cultural productions. The rhythm of the lines is intensified here through the repeated usage of *lā* ("no"), and the latter two lines were often repeated by the poet during performances:

> *lā wa lā nistakīn* (literally: "No, and we will not surrender")
> *ʾinnahum lā yamlikūn* (literally: "They do not own/decide")
> *ʾan nakūn aw lā nakūn* (literally: "If we are or [if] we are not")[10]

It is important to note that an appreciation of this aesthetic quality is not peripheral to understanding the political potential of this and similar poems.[11] Mahjoub Sharif's poems cover a wide range of formats, from songs for children to elegies calling for revolution. But most poems share a poetic language that is concomitantly based on colloquial Sudanese Arabic, playfully rhythmic and associative usage of sounds and images, as well as a persis-

tent moral substructure. In this way they form a body of socially and politically engaged cultural production, which displays, as Magdi El Gizouli summarized it, an "extraordinary capacity to imagine another future in feather-light lines, suitable even for the playful entertainment of children."

It is not surprising, though, given its context of creation, that the antagonistic terms under which the military coup of 1989 and the form of political Islam following it has taken place is reflected in the poem's confrontational dichotomy. What is to be stressed here, however, is that the poem represents not just simple resistance against being put in prison, but a challenge to the attempt to criminalize and thereby marginalize certain forms and contents of publicized expressions. It can thus be seen as resistance to having a fundamental societal difference between legitimate and illegitimate ideas in public spaces enforced through the threat and physical removal of persons contesting centrally, ideologically defined boundaries of such legitimacy.[12]

For such resistance, active intellectual, emotional and communicational links between inside and outside the prison are of essential importance. After the statements of defiance, the letter turns to the sphere of the private—to wife and chil-

dren, who featured often in Sharif's poems as the central emotional reference point, also reminding of the impact of political violence on personal lives.[13] His wife and children were themselves subjected to eviction from their home and exclusion from the government's food ration system. The—at this point assumed, hoped-for—solidarity shown to them by friends is translated here into the larger term *shaʿb* ("community, people").

The strain put on personal relations through enforced distance, as well as the uncertainty about each other's situation, is an intentional element of imprisonment and was reportedly repeatedly stressed during interrogations and torture. But even a certain degree of contact constituted an intended basic element of a prisoner's existence—shared suffering being one of the anticipated emotional consequences leading to behavioral changes among sympathizers. This shows the importance of the appearance not only of those close persons in the letter, but also of them being safe among supporters, an assumption that may have had an almost therapeutic effect.[14]

In the last part of the letter (lines 42-47), greetings widen the view again to the social environment, the sky and the earth—resounding skies and homeland—and the crowds, the envisaged "we" of the future, while ending on a lighter note, reminding of the beauty of expressions still exchanged between young people, in spite of the muzzles.

However, resistance against confinement was not limited to the content of the poem as an expression of the will to resist. As much as controlled fluctuation between uncertainty about and contact to the "life outside" was tried to be used to strengthen the impact of imprisonment, the ways in which Mahjoub Sharif's poems got outside the prison speak not only of the failure of the regime to completely control political and social relations, but also of transgressions beyond the roles assigned to individuals in its executive system.

One of the ways came to use when there was a spontaneous chance, such as a friend being released. Since he was not allowed to have pen and paper, Mahjoub Sharif wrote down what he had composed on the inside of his clothes (a white long gown, called *jellabiya*, or a shirt), on matchboxes or on cigarette packs.[15] In this process, the help of guards, apart from other prisoners and visitors, was also essential, as they sometimes brought ball-point pen cartridges, which were hidden in the elastic band of trousers or in food. The written poems were brought outside in similar secret ways: "A Homesick Sparrow" was brought outside the prison with a jellabiya, into which an imprisoned tailor had sewn it.

However, writing was always the more dangerous way of conserving poems in prison, so Mahjoub Sharif very early adopted oral ways of transfer, having already been before prison an oral poet who was able to recite most of his poems of a more than forty-year period of work. His way of composing and distributing poems started with small elements, verses, which grew over time to the whole poem. He would repeat the parts he was comfortable with loudly, in his cell, in the prison yard, or in the bathroom, so all prisoners and guards would listen to them repeatedly and memorize them. When a poem was finished, he would go around declaiming it with clapping hands and stamping feet, marking the rhythm, which always was a central element of his poems. This made them also easy to adapt as songs, which would become an essential part of cultural life in the prisons he spent time in.[16]

This oral way marked further the boundaries of oppression, as it allowed poems to travel through the heads of other people, be they fellow prisoners or guards. This symbolic breakdown of prison walls was also perceived by the members of the national security (National Intelligence and Security Service, NISS), and Mahjoub

Sharif was repeatedly subjected to beatings on the head—both as a physical and symbolic punishment—and confined to solitary cells. At the same time, support was extended not only by individual members of national security, but, in case of the prison in Kober, by the prison director himself, showing the permeability of the ideologically drawn boundaries and the roles by which they were attempted to be institutionalized.

Against this background, the societal vision and the moral values embedded in the poem are made more urgent through its transportation into a present "we" that is already in the position to speak as a group. Such values—love for one's country, the beauty of solidarity and reciprocity, affectionate family relations, even the aesthetics of words and sounds—can be shared and identified with across a wide range of social actors as good values, thus creating an inclusive social space.[17] A strong anti-violence and anti-censorship stance is built as the only legitimate way towards living these values, thereby converting the attempted criminalization of this cultural production into a positive value of resistance, or at least, in the eyes of those on the other side of the bars, into a moment of confusion over the contradiction between the charges against the prisoner and the values shared with him.

Contextualization

The features of Mahjoub Sharif's poem presented here are only one of many diverse directions poetic production took in Sudan during the 20th century. Covering a wide range of classical, neo-classical, folk, religious, symbolic and surreal poetry,[18] this production had varied considerably in its relation to ruling forces in the country. Sudanese poetry during colonial times, for instance, took both supportive and antagonistic stances, increasingly formulated into nationalist terms, which continued to be used after independence.[19] In a wider discussion of Sudanese poetry, Soghayroon located Mahjoub Sharif's poetry in the aftermath of political poetry born during a popular uprising in October 1964 and as part of both literary and colloquial style used to express popular discontentment with autocratic rule since the 1970s (183-87).

The detailed study necessary to analyze the social, political and emotional relationships involved here cannot be put forward in the frame of this article. What is important to note for the sake of the poem's interpretation in view of cultural policies in Sudan after 1989, is the specific construction of a "we" that is taking place. Such a "we" is presented as an existing group with a unified stand against an oppressive rule. In fact, the mobilization of such a

group, intellectually and emotionally, can be regarded as an underlying function of this poem, especially considering its historical background in protest poetry.

Mahjoub Sharif often highlighted in his poems the need for democratic rule and respect for cultural diversity, which put him in clear opposition to autocratic one-party rule and political Islam. Even one year after his death in April 2014, members of the popular musical group ʿIgid al-Jalād received threats from the NISS for performing songs based on his political poems. Thus, while his poems do not necessarily lead to large-scale political mobilization—though they were an audible part of the popular uprising in 1985—they are obviously perceived as potential threats to the status quo, both under previous and present autocratic regimes.

At the same time, some of his poetic expressions were used by the ruling party itself, such as "We Will Build It" (Ḥanabnīhu) during the 2015 National Congress Party election campaign, from a poem also included in the "Prisoner of Consciousness" campaign in the 1990s. Turning around what Magdi El Gizouli had called making Sharif's poems "part of the politically erotic repertoire of opposition congregation," this appropriation of poetic political language by changing its context reminds of its inevitable ambigu-

ity: it is exactly the constitution of which "we" will build which kind of state that remains violently contested.[20]

As matters stand, this contestation has already broken Sudan apart when South Sudan separated in July 2011, a process that can serve here to provide more context to this appropriation of "we." Northern Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir was greeted in Juba with waving flags proclaiming "separation" and "secession" when he visited South Sudan on 4 January 2011 (Birungi). At the same time, high-ranking politicians from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), ruling in South Sudan, traveled the country to encourage votes for independence in the referendum on 9-15 January 2011. The referendum's result in favor of separation sparked much enthusiasm—a citizen of Juba was quoted saying that "all South Sudanese [celebrated] every night until morning" (al-Samany)—and the official numbers of votes for independence was said to have reached nearly 99%. For different reasons, proponents of exclusionary Islamic orders in northern Sudan celebrated the result as well.

The referendum was followed by high hopes for the 'youngest nation on earth;' South Sudan's first President Salva Kiir Mayardit called it "a dream that has come true" in his inaugural address on 9 July 2011. However, it soon became clear that the basic challenges of people in northern and South Sudan did not disappear with a new border line on the map, and that many of the challenges were not as different as suggested by such a line. In South Sudan, the public façade of liberation gave way to violent struggles for power, exploding into a full-scale war in December 2013.

The ruling party in northern Sudan, the National Congress Party, repeatedly announced a shift from the diversity-oriented Interim Constitution of 2005 after separation, highlighting a threat to "deviant" ways of living and talking in public. President Omar Al-Bashir did not even wait for the referendum to declare the end of cultural diversity in the country in favor of a sharia-based Arab-Muslim constitutional order. His statement responded to criticism directed at one of the few examples of related policies that reached international platforms via YouTube: namely, a police officer filming the flogging of an allegedly adulterous woman in December 2010. While challenges to the workings of a governmental system were turned here into an issue of cultural and national identity, this system was in fact criticized as an oppressive security apparatus protecting the political status quo.

Regarding South Sudan, several legal steps and public statements made a confrontational approach clear. A presidential decree on 9 June 2011 excluded all so-called Southerners from work in the northern government, extended in July to all jobs throughout the country.[21] Dual citizenship was long denied and became in 2012, after long negotiations, part of a Four Freedoms Agreement that still awaits implementation. In South Sudan, many northern Muslims were reported to fear repression after the separation, and, indeed, general sentiments of xenophobia swept through the country about to form.

Confrontation and confusion intensified for those about to be regarded as "Southerners" and thus citizens of a different state. But apart from unresolved legal questions, the separation also posed a personal dilemma for many people living beyond the north-south dichotomy. The writer Stella Gitano, for example, born in South Sudan but living both in Khartoum and Juba and writing in Arabic, lamented political agendas forcing people to choose sides and summarized the encroachment on her "Arab-African" marriage as follows: "If I stay in the north, I will become a foreigner, and if my husband goes to the south, he will become a foreigner" (Kushkush).

In fact, these seemingly bilateral confrontations covered the complexities of inequality and struggle for emancipation that not only marked many marginalized rural areas throughout northern, western, eastern and central Sudan, but also urban dissidents resisting overbearing and discriminating rule at least since the 1989 coup brought the present regime in power. But instead of a popular uprising or broad social movements, Sudan has seen multiple forms of everyday-life resistance for some decades, whose effects can only be seen in details. While a grim economic decline, high inflation, price hikes, gaps and corruption in public finance marked the years that followed the separation, the question was left open if low-key, fragmented everyday struggles and protests, met with focused brutality by security organs, will remain, or if larger-scale movements, as envisioned in the poem, were about to emerge.

In any case, the regime continued to draw different registers of control and diversion: while it attempted to retain control over media coverage and tried to contain political action at universities and other hot-spots of mobilization, it enhanced the production of political spectacles on "enemies of the state"—the rebels, the South, the West etc. In the meantime, a contest over representation went on: Were protesters and other oppositional voices only a few peripheral disgruntled individuals, maybe even instigated by "the West" or Israel or an unidentified foreign agenda? Or were these the first sparks of a public uprising, eventually growing into burning flames? Is the present central government in Khartoum the outcome of free elections in April 2010 and April 2015, showing the will of the majority? Or is it an extension of the military dictatorship which has been ruling in a way that has crippled public resistance against injustices since grasping power through a coup in June 1989, following in the footsteps of previous authoritarian rulers (General Abboud 1958-1964, Colonel Nimeiri 1969-1985)? What "we" is active here?

These questions can enter public spaces in Sudan often only under existential threats or in disguised form. In this article, such obstacles were treated as part of an ongoing negotiation of what constitutes a legitimate presence in public spaces; more specifically, what kind of ideas are allowed to be expressed or make themselves heard against attempts to prevent them from being heard. While belonging to the larger complex of political participation and modalities of social action in public spaces, the focus was here on an artistic form—the poem—as a vessel, carrying under specific conditions of distribution ideas that have been challenged in their public presence under two military rulers (Nimeiri, Bashir) by prohibition and imprisonment.

In this sense, the poem discussed here represents reclamation of public space after its occupation by political forces trying to centralize this negotiation by rendering resistance against its policies as peripheral and illegitimate. While some cultural productions have thus been claimed to take, as majority culture, precedent over peripheral minority cultures, a counter-claim is attempted to be positioned here as an integrative public space that is not less nationalist in its political visions, but argues against centralization of cultural production towards the growing integration of diversity into a Sudanese nation.

Seeing the impending separation of South Sudan as a failure in this regard, a 2011 poem expresses Mahjoub Sharif's disappointment, but also persistent hopes for shared political causes capable of setting "fires" of political resistance across both countries. Rejecting an ethnic or regional definition of such a struggle in favor of an inclusive Sudan, this transcends political developments, from decades past and recent, and furthers both a vision of and an invitation to a "we" that fights for an alternative to divisions used as political tool:

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Mahjoub Sharif
The trees went (extract)

But whatever was,
If citizens by a mark,
If neighbors by a line:
When did you, Nile, become
A number of small streams?
Let us just warm each other, or say
Let us invite each other that day
[When] we ignite the fires.

January 2011 [translation by the author]

محجوب شريف
من: مرت الأشجار

لكنو مهما كان
لو بالوسم سكان
لو بالرسم جيران
متين بقيت يا نيل
عددا من الخيران
نتدفي بس او قول
نعزم بعض يوم داك
بنولع النيران

يناير 2011

Notes

[1] Personal information on Mahjoub Sharif is based on conversations with him and his daughter Mariam, conducted between 2005 and 2015. I thank both for the time and openness they gave me.

[2] See Simone for a deeper discussion of the origins of the present regime as it is based in cliental structures built up by the National Islamic Front.

[3] This was also one of the few instances where some of his poems were translated to English, and the lyrical description of an oppressive security apparatus in "Hey, buffoon! Cling tightly" has been repeatedly quoted; see, for instance, Africa Watch; Ayittey; Verney, Jerome, and Yassin. Amnesty International also mentioned Mahjoub Sharif in previous reports at the beginning of the 1980s; see also Rajab.

[4] A more detailed biography, mostly written by the author, and further sources can be found in the English and Arabic Wikipedia articles on Mahjoub Sharif.

[5] This poem has recently been featured in the exhibition "@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz" (September 2014 to April 2015), organized by the Chinese artist and the FOR-SITE Foundation. In the section "Stay Tuned," a voice recording by the poet could be heard while sitting in one of the former prison's cells.

[6] The English translation was created by Adil Babikir in 2014.

[7] There are five further lines, which were discovered only in the end of 2014 and are therefore not part of the translation.

[8] This reminds of the description of Robben Island as "University of Struggle," which was built by prisoners' constant challenge of conditions inside and outside the prison walls, formed into poetry by Dennis Brutus (Buntman 34).

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→ [9] This focus thus differs significantly from statements of Sudanese dissidents that were mentioned by Hale: "As for their prison days, I often heard the men say that these were the best years of their lives—being among men, telling stories, sharing everything, organizing for their return for freedom" ("Memory" 435). Hale's observation rather points to the gendered experience of inside and outside the prison, and in extension of resistance in general, an aspect vaguely perceptible some lines further below.

[10] This alludes to the Shakespearean wording "to be or not to be," without necessitating an awareness of this allusion for an appreciation of the rhythmic beauty of the lines.

[11] Ogunyemi noted about Wole Soyinka's prison poetry that "the poet shamelessly courts the public and so must state his case simply, lucidly, and captivatingly to put his opponents in the wrong" (82). It is not clear in how far "shame" should be an issue here, and the claimed immediate influence on political events in Nigeria seems to simplify historical events. However, both instances show poetry reaching actively out from confinement in a way facilitating broad intelligibility.

[12] See Elinson and Orlando for a similar, though post-prison challenge of the official discourse on the so-called Lead Years in Morocco. Thiong'o (13) spoke broadly about "the physical removal of patriots from the peoples' organized struggles" (qtd. in Abou-bakr 261).

[13] In other poems, this aspect was center-stage, such as "Waiting For You" (Fī intiẓārik), written to his wife, and "Mariam and May" (Mariam wa May), written to his daughters. The extension of the personal to the societal reminds of the prison poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz (Coppola).

[14] See the consideration of an emotionally stabilizing function of poetry on political violence in Reynolds et al.

[15] Similarly, Whalen contains on pages xiii-xv letters of imprisoned Irish Republican Laurence McKeown on toilet and cigarette paper, sent in this form to the Irish Press.

[16] See the social function of prison poetry in Sánchez-Flavian.

[17] The stress of people's positive identification with social and natural beauty against an oppressive "them" may also be seen as different from the more aggressive prison poetry of, for instance, Etheridge Knight, although it has a similar communal communicative function (Hill).

[18] Studies on Sudanese poetry written in English are scarce, see Shoush; Hale, "Arts;" Abdel Hai; Jayyusi 452-64; Soghayroon.

[19] Compare, for instance, Muhammad, stressing female poets inciting men to fight against colonial rule, and Sharkey, highlighting poets' compliance with the rulers.

[20] Gready reminded in his text on political prison writing under apartheid that the "meaning of the written word, regardless of author, is an approximation, open to interpretation and appropriation" (507). The same can be said about oral communication as well.

21 This was legally executed through amendment of the Nationality Act in August 2011.

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REVIEW

Jordi Tejel Gorgas: "La Question kurde: Passé et présent."

Djene Rhys Bajalan

In recent years, historian Jordi Tejel Gorgas has contributed greatly to the study of Kurdish history. His 2007 monograph, *Le Mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: Continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)*, examines the activities of Kurdish nationalists from Turkey in French mandatory Syria, while his 2009 book, *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, provides an excellent overview of the often forgotten Kurdish population of Syria. Gorgas' latest work, *La Question kurde: Passé et présent*, is broader in scope, presenting the reader with a general historical introduction to the Kurdish question. Although the book is relatively short, the depth and breadth of the narrative is both ambitious and impressive. Within the space of a mere 125 pages (excluding bibliography), the author examines the evolution of the Kurdish question across a wide geographical space from the late nineteenth century to the present day. He thereby encompasses Kurdish inhabited lands in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

La Question kurde: Passé et présent is comprised of an introduction and six chronologically organized chapters. In his introduction, Gorgas recognizes the difficult nature of, and risks associated with, overgeneralization regarding the Kurds, a people of great linguistic and religious diversity. He notes the necessity of striking a "balance between the necessary precautions in the epistemological study of ethnic or national groups—including avoiding the essentialization of groups—and the study of the evolution of the identity, or rather the Kurdish identities" (19). This nuanced approach towards the Kurds and the Kurdish question forms the basis of Gorgas' scholarship and provides a refreshing change from recently published journalistic works, some of which oversimplify Kurdish-related issues.

The book's first chapter opens with the emergence of the Kurdish question in the late Ottoman period, highlighting the role of a new class of Kurdish intellectuals in the development and consolidation of Kurdish identity. However, it is argued that it was not until the end of the Great War and the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire that, at least amongst some of the Ottoman Kurdish elite, Kurdish nationalism came to replace commitment to the Ottoman political order.

The second chapter focuses on the inter-war period and on the development of the Kurdish movement in the new nation-states of Turkey and Iran as well as the Kurdish movement in semi-colonial states of French mandatory Syria and the British-dominated Kingdom of Iraq. Regarding

Turkey and Iran, Gorgas highlights the similarities between the two countries' uncompromising approaches to the Kurdish populations: Military repression accompanied by a 'civilizing mission' that cast the Kurds as 'pre-modern' reactionaries. However, whereas in Turkey these policies were largely successful (at least until the 1960s), the 1941 Anglo-Soviet invasion and the subsequent collapse of the Iranian state, provided an opportunity for Kurdish nationalist mobilization and for the emergence of the short-lived Mahabad Republic in 1947. Gorgas contrasts this with developments in Syria and Iraq, where political life was dominated by European imperialism. In particular, he highlights the relationships forged between the European powers and new 'minority' groups (such as the Kurds) in fostering the notion amongst Arab nationalists that Kurdish political mobilization in Syria and Iraq was the result of imperialist intrigues.
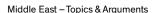
In broad terms, the third chapter assesses both developments in Turkey, Iran and Syria as well as some of the broader historical trends—including the decline of European influence and the discrediting of Western style "bourgeois democracy" in the Arab world in the period between 1946 and 1960. However, the chapter focuses primarily on the emergence of the Kurdish movement in Iraq and, in particular, the dynamics unleashed by the 1958 Iraqi Revolution. Gorgas highlights the shift from a spirit of cooperation between Iraqi's revolutionary dictator Abd al-Karim Qassim and Kurdish nationalists in the initial aftermath of the revolution towards a growing antagonism and conflict, which came to a head in 1961 with the outbreak of Iraqi's Kurdish revolution. Chapter Four covers the period between 1961 and 1991, a period characterized by "an acceleration of history for the Kurdish national movement …" (71). According to Gorgas, this acceleration was framed by a number of broad socio-economic changes—rapid urbanization, population growth, increasing access to education, the development of new intellectual groups and the emergence of the youth as a social group in itself—all of which impacted not only the Kurds but all Middle Eastern peoples. As in earlier chapters, the author examines developments across the Kurdish world, including developments amongst the growing Kurdish diaspora in Europe. However, it is the developments in Turkey and Iraq which take center stage. This includes the emergence of left-wing Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (better known by its Kurdish acronym PKK) as well as the Kurdish struggle in Iraq, which resulted in the Anfal genocide of 1988 and, ultimately, in the establishment of a quasi-independent Kurdish entity in 1992, following the First Gulf War. The penultimate chapter discusses developments between the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq in 1992 and the outbreak of the Second Gulf War in 2003. Gorgas argues that the experience of the Kurds in northern Iraq had serious implications for the Kurdish movement beyond Iraq's boundaries. He points out that the international intervention that allowed for the establishment of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq "created the necessary conditions for the Kurdish question to gain an unprecedented level of visibility" (93). This is particularly apparent when examining the Kurdish movement in Turkey, where the PKK established itself as the hegemonic power in Turkish Kurdistan.

The book's final chapter brings the narrative into contemporary times through a discussion of the events of the last decade (2003-2013). Gorgas identifies this period as marking a "new acceleration of history for the Middle East" (109), one precipitated by the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In narrating this acceleration, the author examines a number of recent events including developments within the Kurdish region of Iraq, the emergence of

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the Kurdish 'peace initiative' in Turkey, political mobilization in Iranian Kurdistan and the emergence of de facto Kurdish autonomy in Syria following the revolution of 2011.

In general terms, *La Question kurde: Passé et présent* offers the reader an excellent overview of the Kurdish question and its historical development. It is readable with Gorgas condensing, what is an extremely complex subject, into a relatively short space without sacrificing depth or nuance. Hence, it will provide both those with a general interest in the Kurdish question as well as Middle East specialists with an excellent primer on this most fraught and problematic of topics.

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Haidar Eid: "'Worlding' (Post) Modernism: Interpretative Possibilities of Critical Theory"

Hanna AlTaher

Haidar Eid is an independent political commentator and a professor of comparative and postcolonial literature at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza. He holds a PhD in literature and philosophy from Johannesburg University and has published on neo-colonialism in V. S. Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River*, on social justice and resistance to Israeli occupation, as well as on the BDS movement. Among his latest public interventions is *Gaza Blues: Hymns of Love, Death and Resistance*, a collection of poems and songs written after the Israeli airstrikes on Gaza in 2014. Independently of whether one agrees with his political involvement or not, it expresses Eid's view of art as a possibility to resist the very same reality it is part of.

This review of Eid's *'Worlding' (Post)Modernism* aims to explore the book's contribution to critical approaches in postcolonial theorization. *'Worlding' (Post) Modernism* was first published in 2014 by Roman Books, an independent publisher based in Kolkata and London; it was printed and bound in India. Eid's book is based on his PhD thesis. He develops an argument for a reconstruction of critical literary theory that preserves an anti-authoritarian character against the logic of post-al theories, that is, theories like postmodernism, post-structuralism, and post-pragmatism (18). The study aims at understanding the totality of the world, while keeping and perhaps making gaps for resisting that totality. In doing so, it not only contributes to literary criticism but also to critical theory.

The book is dedicated to Edward Said, for whom scholarship had to be political if it was to be meaningful. This sheds light on Eid's own understanding of the intellectual as being in the world, or *worlded*, alluding to the title of his book. The first part of the study is an extensive critical reading of (post)modern theory, drawing on a wide range of literature on realism, postmodernism, (neo-)Marxist approaches, and post-structuralism, such as approaches outlined by Jameson, Zavarzadeh, Lyotard, Habermas, Adorno, and Horkheimer. Eid's discussion assumes a reader already well versed in postmodern, literary and critical thought.

The main body of the book analyzes two very different novels, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), demonstrating that both novels, one realist and one postmodern, are products of their time and that both reflect a continuation of capitalist modes of production. By contrasting the two novels, Eid argues that postmodernism is a continuation of modernism rather than a definite break. Hence Eid's use of the term (post)modern,

emphasizing that continuation. Both novels represent within themselves different forms of the same political economy. As Eid uses the realities of the novels' protagonists to explain and analyze Marxist theory and the effects of capitalism, the study can give insight into Marxism in an accessible way. However, it would have been helpful to have more references to primary sources.

Eid assumes a dialectical interplay between political content, context, and aesthetic qualities in literature, so he sees the novel as a mirror to the external world from which it emerged (124). Accordingly, he interprets the novels' styles of writing and the issues the protagonists face as embedded in, and at the same time as reflecting on, their respective phase of capitalist development. Eid relies on a reading and conscious misreading of both novels (120), emphasizing a historic continuation between them. By doing so, he highlights that despite a temporal gap of seventy years between their publications, both novels narrate stories in which the goal of the capitalist market is to create consumers who perpetuate the existing system, mainly by not opposing it. This brings Eid to Gramsci's notion of hegemony, or to put it differently, co-optation of the people. Thus the modes of production and capitalism's progress (or decline)

become clearly visible in everyday life. Likewise, the discourse of modernism, used by Joyce, is part of the contestation concerning the hegemony of either capitalist or socialist relations of production (199). With this in mind, Eid addresses the changeability of the concept of the family, and how shifts in its significance and function correspond with the production relations of different eras (152).

Further elaborating on continuities, by drawing on Jameson and Eagleton, the change from realism and modernism to postmodernism appears as a transformation from monopoly capitalism and imperialism to late/multinational consumer capitalism. For Eid, (post)modernism continues the proceedings of colonialism and modernity, pushing the project to "civilize" and "humanize" towards its (post)modern endgame: to absorb and consume the "other" (63). "What globalization produces," according to Eid, "is a deepening of the gap between those who have and those who do not have" (87). From the author's perspective, globalization produces the unification of capital on a world scale, but it leads to the fragmentation and the division of workers and other subordinate groups. Wealth is created at the cost of diminishing human potential and dehumanizing lower classes and nations, which Eid sees represented in the gloomy and

backward Iron City, the "unconscious" or "other" in *White Noise*. Reconfirming the idea of the novel as a mirror to the external world, Eid sees in *White Noise* a microcosm of "America," by which he means only the United States. From an author grounded in postcolonial theory, an explanation or reflection on this terminology would seem possible. While throughout his study, Eid points to the entanglement of capitalism with structures of oppression, such as racism or patriarchy, it remains unclear if the economic condition is the main force shaping people's reality, or rather how exactly it relates to other oppressive structures.

Eid states that he pursues a "dialectical, and historical materialist understanding of history in general, and the twentieth century in particular" (153). With Althusser he maintains that the structure of our thinking about the social world, about ourselves, and about our role within that world is related to ideology and ultimately to the socio-economic condition. Here the question arises of how those deprived can represent themselves on their own terms. Eid regards Habermas' project of modernity, his theory of communicative rationality, as one option. But he acknowledges that it is not the only alternative, and that there are other constructive, democratic ways forward. Eid's deliberations are comprehen-

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sible and make sense. However, he does not make clear on what basis he chose these two novels and not other novels representing modernism and postmodernism, respectively.

Concerned with patriarchy as an oppressive structure related to other forms of oppression, such as racism (72), Eid makes a point through the style of his writing by referring to "(wo)men," instead of just "men." However, this use of language is not consistent and it remains vague whether Eid follows a particular logic or not. Some sentences only mention men: "in the industrial society, money mediates between man's needs and commodities" (158). However, do we really live in a bisexual/bigendered world; is reality not slightly more complex than that? Moreover, what does this phrasing really do? Apart from acknowledging, that yes, women do exist, does the author convey

any additional meaning by saying "(wo)men" that could not have been conveyed by writing "people"? Beyond a change in vocabulary, how would the analysis change if it included a feminist approach towards how men and women are actually affected differently by capitalism and patriarchy, and how that simultaneously ties into racist structures?

This study, just as the novels Eid is analyzing to make his argument, is a product of its time. It reflects on it, and cannot be separated from it. That intertwinement is, then, exactly what opens up the potential for protest. Critical theory always looks for ruptures within the system, marking a starting point for resisting it. It also emphasizes the importance of ethical values in literature, especially the novel. For Eid the fundamental purpose for the existence of a critical theory that is multidimensional and multiperspectival, is not only to

describe and comprehend the world, but also to offer alternative worlds (89). Through a critical reading his objective is to make an alternative meaning visible, from which the potential for resistance arises (121).

Understanding Eid's writing on his own terms might also require the reader to understand this work in the context of the author's other interventions. Eid's reading opens connections to critical and postcolonial theorizations and debates. However, the explicit inclusion of a feminist reading, or works of fiction in languages other than English, might take his project a step further and place it more firmly in today's world of alternatives. Finally, Eid's study confirms what scholars like Said or Horkheimer and Adorno assessed: That power structures cannot be bypassed but that literary theory can be a tool to make them visible.

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