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عودة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين

שיבת הפליטים הפלסטינים

REALIZING THE RETURN
OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

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Transitioning Towards Equality and Return:
Building the one-state Movement

Adv. Allegra Pacheco

Today, I would like to focus on Tuesday, the day after this conference. How do we start working towards an appropriate political framework that will enable *Awda* – the return of Palestinian refugees? Many supporters of *Awda* advocate one democratic secular state – the so-called one-state political solution conferring full political and economic equality to all residents of historic Palestine. This solution would facilitate the return of refugees and enable them to begin their lives here on an equal footing.

Unfortunately, the one-state political solution has yet to transform into a real movement. It is often criticized as insignificant and unrealistic, and also unappealing to the Israeli Jewish population. If we want to take *Awda* out of the theoretical sphere, we need to overcome these naysayers and focus on the political. I'd like to suggest some practical first steps.

I. Making the one-state movement significant

The one-state movement must emerge from inside historical Palestine to have any significance. We are the only realistic force to push the powers at be to adopt this political solution. But the movement will not reach true significance unless it becomes a mass movement with large numbers of Jewish and Palestinian residents calling for this change. For the movement to become a mass movement, it should become a real political movement and act like one. It must:

- Develop a core group with committed activists for the long haul.
- Meet regularly in publicly announced places.
- Create geographic subcommittees.
- Elect a named leadership and publicize who they are.
- Create a clear and concise political vision with action plans and strategies.
- Have a definable location – an address (person and geographic).
- Be active on all media to show that it exists and that it is significant.

The movement must recruit well-respected persons and bodies who have a large sphere of influence in their communities, either to join or be part of a supportive outer circle. The movement also has to move. It must reach out to communities all over historic Palestine and convince people to support it and join. The movement must establish a program of roving lecturers, using influential people to speak directly to the people, both at public events and at more informal house and community center meetings.

II. Attracting Israeli Jews

As the movement's goal is to become a mass movement with both Palestinian and Jewish populations involved, it must directly address Israeli Jewish fears and doubts. Most of the one-state declarations I've seen do not do this directly. To do this, the movement must:
- Explain up front why one state is preferable for Israeli Jews over the current state.
- Provide convincing reasons why Jews should give up their privilege, control and power.
- Describe in detail what it would be like for Jews to live in a single state in terms of their property, culture, religion and language.

Declarations could adhere upfront to a return of Palestinian refugees with no involuntary uprooting of Israeli Jews, and to constitutionally guaranteed rights to maintain national, cultural and religious identities and practices. Even proposing names for the state could allay some Israeli Jewish fears: "Union of Palestinian and Jewish States", or "United Palestinian and Jewish States."

The movement must also be honest about the implications of the one state. While initially a victory in the struggle against apartheid and segregation, the one-state solution is ultimately a compromise for the Palestinian struggle. It gives legitimacy to the presence of the Israeli Jew/ Zionist settler – everyone gets to stay, but with equal rights. Understood as a compromise, such an approach could bring more Israeli Jews into the movement.

In light of this historic compromise, the movement needs to develop a broad and well-thought out reparations plan for refugees and others who have lost lives, land, livelihoods and inheritances.

III. The most realistic solution

The movement must show that the political goals of a 'one-state' are practical and realistic. The movement must create itself in a way that shows that the people in this land want this goal over all others. To address Palestinian skepticism of its feasibility, the movement must portray clearly why this political solution is preferable to others. It must provide a credible political plan on how it can achieve the one-state solution, the reparations process and the implementation of *Awda*.

In addition to persuading the masses through lectures, writings and face-to-face meetings, people in the movement should live the 'one state' by example. They should set up prototypes of one-state institutions, equality projects that would demonstrate how people would live, work and act together in a one-state society and how services and resources would be managed. These projects would reify the one-state idea.

The equality projects would be first and foremost political projects (unlike the work of most current NGOs and civil society organizations). They would be established first in the 1948 areas with Palestinian and Israeli Jewish residents committed to one state. Later, 1948 citizens could be bridges to projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and abroad. All persons working on the equality projects would commit to the one-state solution with the following principles:

- Full equality for all residents.
- No involuntary uprooting of persons from their homes.
- Separation of church and state with guaranteed respect for freedom of religion, and national and ethnic
- rights in the private sphere.
- A reparations process for past wrongs, including repatriation of Palestinian refugees.

Equality projects could entail:
- Urban planners' guilds designing neighborhoods for returning refugees.
- Sports and/or cultural centers.
- Alternative bar associations providing free or low-cost legal services, alternative dispute resolution, drafting the one-state constitution, and reparations schemes.
- Summer camps.
- Environmental/water projects.
- Restaurants and leisure centers.
- Food co-ops.
- Childcare facilities.
- Secondhand clothing distribution and community swaps.
- Community prayer and spiritual activities.

Later, these projects could think bigger, by establishing more institutions that could support the political movement. Projects like colleges, technological and science research initiatives, construction of buildings and neighborhoods, commercial spaces, and industrial food projects (such as dairies).
Done correctly, the equality projects could achieve the following:

- Demonstrate concretely how the one-state principles are realistic and preferable.
- Show that the movement is serious, significant and growing.
- Provide a permanent common space to meet, build political relations and strengthen the core groups working towards the one state.
- Break the segregation between Jews and Palestinians.
- Counter the current "normalization" industry and projects aimed at legitimizing Zionist control without equality and/or reparation for past wrongs.
- Create self-sustainable projects that are not foreign aid - dependent.
- Empower citizens on the local level to make political change in light of leadership impotency and the current imbalance of power.
- Provide needed services and concretely improve residents' lives.

IV. The time is now

After six decades of denial of rights, oppression, and dispossession, why wouldn't this be the right time? There is relative quiet which makes people feel safer to think about political alternatives. There is also a vacuum in political vision. And we should begin planning for the eventual collapse of the negotiations and/or a new "Oslo" that would compromise on Palestinian refugee rights.

Finally, we should take advantage of the changing realities on the ground and shifts by former unconvinced groups like Fatah, Israeli Zionist leftists and even Israeli settlers. In the West Bank, there are some budding "break the segregation" projects on the ground. This is the time to influence their political direction towards one-state thinking.

A sign erected by Israeli settlers in the Bethlehem area is quite telling. Here, the settlers are recognizing two key facts: (1) That the current political arrangement in the West Bank is indeed unequal, and (2) that they can concede equality, at least on the roads. I call this an opening and it should be explored while it is still quiet. Just consider the major political victory if a large group of Israeli settlers conceded full equality and supported the one-state movement as their solution as well.

To conclude, the one-state solution will provide the optimal political order for *Awda*. In order to achieve this, we must start working on the ground and build a real, mass political movement. If implemented, these first steps that I have suggested can move us towards this goal.

"On the Road We Are All Equal: Making Peace on the Road"

Allegra Pacheco, **West Bank, is an international human rights lawyer, former UN official and a graduate of Columbia Law School.**

Reconciliation in Peace Agreements: The Geneva Initiative as Test Case

Yoav Kapshuk

In its preamble, the Geneva Accord for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict states that the "Agreement marks the historic reconciliation between the Palestinians and Israelis, and paves the way to reconciliation between the Arab World and Israel."[1] But does the agreement bear the hallmarks of a historic reconciliation? Does it really include the elements of such reconciliation? This paper presents the findings of a study attempting to answer those questions by focusing on the article of the accord which addresses the subject of the 1948 refugees and historical responsibility for the Nakba.

The conflict resolution literature offers several models for transcending conflict, including the reconciliation model. According to this literature, reconciliation is designed to induce both sides to an ethno-national conflict to deal with the core issues, with emphasis on justice and truth regarding past wrongs, accepting historical responsibility for committing them, compensation, and redistribution of resources in order to create a more equitable society. Most of this literature refers to reconciliation as occurring in post-conflict areas, where a formal peace agreement has been signed and violence has ended. Reconciliation, in this sense, is a prolonged and profound process that proceeds long after formal peace has been finalized.

Studies about reconciliation as a post-conflict process are part of the growing transitional justice literature. Yet, to the best of my knowledge there are hardly any studies about reconciliation - or transitional justice - as key elements in the peace agreements themselves. My study attempted to fill this gap by analyzing the Geneva Accord signed by Israeli and Palestinian public figures in 2003. The signatories suggested a model for a permanent settlement based on the two-state vision of the Oslo process. The initiative's importance lies in that it is based on formal negotiations and agreements between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, including the so-called Taba Talks and Clinton Parameters. Its importance also lies in the fact that some of the signatories have taken active parts in formal negotiations.

My analysis will focus on Article 7 of the accord, which addresses the subject of the Palestinian refugees. Of all the controversial issues in this conflict, the 1948 War and its consequences are foundational to both the Israelis' and the Palestinians' national identity. Both treat the Right of Return as pivotal to their national existence in the present and future. On one hand, 1948 is the key date in modern Palestinian history - to many, the Nakba is the foundational event constituting the condition of the Palestinian people today. On the other hand, many Israeli Jews view the very possibility of Palestinians' return with existential fear, and therefore adamantly refuse to allow any refugees back into Israeli sovereign territory.

Thus, in order for a final settlement such as the Geneva model be considered an agreement that includes elements of reconciliation and transitional justice, it must be centered on Israeli acknowledgement of the historic injustice of the 1948 War. Such an agreement must include Israeli recognition of the refugees' right to return to its sovereign territory, as well as agreement that actual return will take the needs of Israeli Jews into account.

Analysis of Article 7

The signatories to the Geneva Accord recognized that resolving the refugee issue was critical to ending the conflict, and devoted an entire article to it, which includes 14 sub-articles. The first sub-article acknowledges the importance of the issue, emphasizing that "an agreed resolution of the refugee problem is necessary for achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace" (Article 7.1(i)). The wish to achieve a "just peace" in the context of the refugee issue could be taken to mean that the accord will endorse the 'justice principle' - one of the key principles in reconciliation theories. However, merely putting the words "just peace" on paper is insufficient to deal with the issue in a serious and substantive manner. In order to attain a just peace, this principle must serve as an agreed-upon basis for a settlement and be addressed in practical terms in the agreement's provisions. The burden of proof lies with the authors, and my analysis shows that the authors chose to bear only part of this responsibility.

Article 7.2 makes reference to UN General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions 194 and 242, as well as to the Arab Peace Initiative, stating that the rights recognized therein "are fulfilled according to Article 7 of this Agreement." The reference to UN resolutions - particularly Resolution 194, which entitles the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes - represents significant progress compared to the interim agreements signed in the course of the Oslo process, which avoided any reference to Resolution 194. Yet, this sub-article is (perhaps intentionally) vague, due to Israel's preference not to get into details when it comes to the refugee issue. Otherwise, how can we explain the lack of reference to the substance of these resolutions, particularly 194?

[1] See http://www.geneva-accord.org/ mainmenu/english for the full text. The English version of the Geneva Accord is the version of record.

It appears that the reason for this obfuscation and the avoidance of detailed reference to the content of the UN resolutions lies in the Israeli signatories' desire to undercut the relevance of those resolutions by having the parties agree that refugee rights are fulfilled only according to Article 7. Had the parties avoided any mention of these resolutions, it could be argued that the initiative simply ignored them. But the agreement, in Article 7 itself, that the resolutions would be "fulfilled according to Article 7" makes it difficult for detractors to claim that the Accord ignores previous resolutions and fails to comply with them.

Article 7.3 discusses compensation. The difficulty with this article is that it avoids mentioning who exactly is supposed to compensate the refugees. The reconciliation literature views the compensator's identity as critical, since identification is a prerequisite for accepting historical responsibility for past wrongs. However, this article — and the entire Accord, in fact — include no mention of the events leading to the refugee problem, nor to Israel's particular responsibility thereof. The very avoidance of this issue can be construed as an evasion of inquiry into historical truth and justice. Even the sub-articles discussing compensators and compensation mechanisms — Articles 7.9 and 7.10 — fail to mention Israel as responsible for the injustice for which the refugees are entitled to compensation. Ironically, Israel's responsibility for the refugees is alluded to in sentences that are worded precisely to relieve Israel of any responsibility for the Nakba, such as Articles 7.9(iii) or 7.7 (End of Claims). These sentences are the only ones in the agreement that suggest Israel is in any way accountable for the wrongs committed against the Palestinians. In other words, it is precisely the inclusion of a commitment to ending all claims regarding the refugee issue that attests to Israel's direct involvement with — and implicitly, its responsibility — for the refugee problem.

Neither does the key sub-article on the Right of Return, Article 7.4, include any elements of reconciliation. In fact, the articles rejects the refugees' right to return to the places where they resided before 1948, unless they lived in an area that will be transferred to Palestine as part of a land swap. Despite the opening statement that the refugees will exercise "informed choice" of their permanent residence, only the option to return to a territory under future Palestinian sovereignty is fully available to them. The other options — settling in third countries, in Israel, or in present host countries — are up to the discretion of the countries in question. This stipulation allows Israel to absorb a tiny number of refugees, particularly given that it would "consider the average of the total numbers" absorbed in third countries. This statement is highly significant, as it relieves Israel of any particular responsibility for the refugee issue by equalizing Israel's status with that of other countries that would be willing to absorb some refugees.

The provisions discussed hitherto suggest that the Geneva Accord fails to meet the conditions of a reconciliation process. However, the last paragraph, Article 7.14(iv), refers directly to past injustices and therefore might be considered suitable in a reconciliatory peace agreement: "These [reconciliation] programs may include developing appropriate ways of commemorating those villages and communities that existed prior to 1948." Even this statement, however, is somewhat vague, and it seems carefully worded to avoid any mention of the events and consequences of the 1948 War. First, it is no coincidence that these "villages and communities" are not identified as Palestinian. Second, the words "existed prior" do not carry negative connotations like the words "destruction," "expulsion," or "Nakba," words whose inclusion would have shed a clearer light on the wrongs perpetrated against the Palestinians.

To conclude, my analysis of the Geneva Accord suggests that its model for a permanent settlement ignores issues of justice, truth and historical responsibility. Above all, it excludes detailed reference to the events of 1948, accountability for the Nakba, and a just solution to the Palestinian refugees' Right of Return. Thus, the accord does not include elements of reconciliation, apart from a few preliminary gestures evident in Article 7.14. My conclusion is that in order to arrive at a true solution to the conflict, elements of reconciliation must be taken into account already in the first stages of negotiations, and in particular, must be substantially included in the agreement itself. Such an agreement could be based on the two-state model, but clearly reconciliatory elements will also be appropriate for agreements articulating alternative visions such as varieties of the one-state model.

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Towards a Bi-National End-Game in Palestine/Israel

Jeff Halper

In our struggle for a just peace in Palestine/Israel, we find ourselves at a precarious crossroads: While it is clear that the two-state solution is dead and gone, the Palestinians, whose lead we must follow, have only just begun formulating alternatives, mainly around the notion of a single democratic state. Yet being engrossed in a political struggle with no end-game to advocate is fraught with danger. Other forces may step into the breach, able to impose their own agendas in the absence of one supported by progressive civil society. This is especially the case since, if the fall of previous oppressive regimes shows a pattern, it is that they collapse suddenly. In my view, the Israeli occupation is weaker than it appears and could collapse at any time. It is urgent that we anticipate this and enter into serious strategizing – Palestinians, critical Israelis and internationals together – if we want to be the ones who determine the final outlines of a just settlement.

Essential elements of a just and sustainable peace

Constructing a just and workable political system encompassing the two peoples of Palestine/Israel – the end-game – must begin by identifying those elements upon which it must rest. In order to begin that process, I suggest that a just peace:

- **Accept the bi-national reality of Palestine/Israel and be inclusive of both peoples.** The national identities of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews, both seeking self-determination in a common land, cannot be ignored or denied if a workable and substantially just resolution to the conflict is to be realized.
- **Strike a balance between collective rights (self-determination) and individual rights (democracy)** - between a shared state system and one that gives each people substantive space for cultural expression.
- **Conform to human rights, international law and UN resolutions** in respect to both the collective and individual rights of both peoples. If power negotiations alone determine the outcome, Israel wins and the conflict becomes irresolvable.
- **Fully resolve the refugee issue.** This requires Israeli acceptance of the Right of Return as set down in UN General Assembly Resolution 194; Israeli acknowledgement of its responsibility in creating the refugee issue, a symbolic act upon which closure and eventual reconciliation depends; and only then technical solutions involving mutually agreed-upon combinations of repatriation, resettlement elsewhere and financial compensation.
- **Be economically viable.** All citizens of Palestine/Israel must have equal access to the country's basic resources and economic institutions. Once viable economic and political structures are in place, the Palestinian Diaspora will invest in the country, supporting in particular the Palestinian sector – a source of economic parity seldom taken into account.
- **Address the security concerns of all in the region.**
- **Be regional in scope.** Palestine/Israel is too small a unit to address such regional issues as refugees, water, security, economic development and the environment. Any peace process must provide a suitable regional environment in which Palestine/Israel can integrate, ultimately leading to a regional confederation.

Towards a bi-national state in Palestine/Israel

All proposed solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict begin with a state structure, if only because the international system is organized on that basis. That, however, must reflect the bi-national character of Palestine/Israel; indeed, it will borrow both from the democratic structures and procedures (such as elections) of European states – based as they are on an atomized body of citizens, and the ethnic, national, cultural, religious and political associations that comprise it – and the traditional building blocks of the body politic in the Middle East, where multiculturalism was the norm.

In order to represent the interests and views of both the national communities of Palestine/ Israel and its individual citizens, a consociational democracy based on power-sharing could be mixed with direct democracy. Each voter would have two votes: One for whichever representative of the community s/he belonged to (or most identified with), and the other for a representative from his/her constituency. The parliament would accordingly be composed of two houses: one representing the national communities, and the other representing the electorate's wishes through constituent elections. Each house could legislate laws which, if passed within its chambers, would require the approval of the other house. Through the parliament, each sector would elect a representative to a governing Federal Executive Council which would be composed of three councilors: A representative of the Palestinian community, a representative of the Israeli Jewish

community, and a representative of the general electorate. In this way Palestine/Israel would, unlike Western states, validate the national identities of its two constituent communities. And instead of being the repository of national identity – thus raising the irresolvable question of who the state "belongs" to – the relatively weak executive would act merely as an administrative unit, as in Switzerland or Belgium.

To further enhance each people's national heritage and self-expression, each might found a national university, a national museum and a national theater, as well as operate newspapers, television channels and schools – all alongside, however, public institutions for those who wishing to develop a common civil identity: non-sectarian schools and universities, common cultural spaces and inclusive labor movements, not to mention mere neighborliness.

And since a bi-national solution does not require the dismantlement of settlements – their very integration will neutralize their exclusive and controlling character – it does not require "ending the Occupation," the main obstacle to the two-state solution. It simply transforms the entire country into the normal territory of a state. Indeed, the establishment of a bi-national state in Palestine/Israel based on power-sharing and a mix of communal and common democratic institutions will resolve the refugee issue in the normal course of its development. Able to finally serve the needs of both peoples within a common geographical space extending from the river to the sea, joint planning bodies could comprehensively address the various facets of refugee return: returning to the actual sites of the their villages and rebuilding, returning to their urban properties, accepting fair compensation, and integrating into Israel's cities, towns and villages, as well as into the Jewish settlements of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, thus nullifying their control.

Concrete steps towards the realization of a common consociational state

The manner in which Israel's warehousing of the Palestinians has been allowed to progress unfettered by the US and Europe demonstrates a key fact of international politics: as long as any situation can be quieted to the point where it ceases to disrupt the world system it can be tolerated. Governments prefer repressed injustice to the difficulties of pursuing true justice. If we seek a truly just settlement, it is up to us, the international civil society led by Palestinians and critical Israeli Jews, to formulate what that would be.

Actually constructing the most appropriate political structure is not a tremendously difficult problem. Models exist upon which we can build. Most crucial is to decide what political community we are talking about: a shared bi-national one, an electorate composed merely of individual voters, or a polity based on the domination of one people over the other (or even the exclusion of the other). This is the issue on which everything depends, upon which a political structure is built. And to a large degree it is the Palestinians who must signal what options they accept before we can progress. Until today, that has not happened; indeed, the rise of the settler colonial paradigm in recent years leaves it unclear what place Palestinians reserve for Israeli Jews in the future state, if any. This is the most urgent issue facing us as the moment, one in which the conflict between absolute and transitional justice must be resolved. It is the nut that has to be cracked before we can begin formulating any just solution. In my view, envisioning the future state and society constitutes the primary agenda before us.

Towards a comprehensive Middle East peace

A bi-national state would address the most urgent need at hand: Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But Palestine/Israel is too small a unit to address such issues as refugees, water, economic development or security – all of which are regional problems. A flourishing Palestine/Israel cannot exist in a highly militarized region characterized by poverty, inter-communal conflict and autocratic regimes. The establishment of a state in Palestine/Israel, then, would be but a first stage in creating a comprehensive political and economic structure necessary for stabilizing and developing the region as a whole. Eventually, a Middle East Confederation might be constructed – a political association based more on the multicultural heritage of the Middle East than on non-representative states.

Now is the time for us, civil society, to brainstorm, envision, strategize and act.

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Return(s) in the Oral Histories of Palestinian Exiles

Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek

Introduction

Palestinian displacement is not an event of the past, but an on-going process that continues to dispossess new generations of Palestinians. As a result of this lasting dispossession, Palestinian *Ghurba* (exile) is composed today of people with diverse diasporic backgrounds. The discussion of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees needs to be placed in the context of the multiplicity of these trajectories and in relation to the ongoing occupation that continues to create new displacements.

Recognizing the multiplicity of diasporic experiences, this article will discuss ways in which different generations of Palestinians who now live in Poland and the UK narrate and imagine the idea of return. Its findings are based on forty oral history interviews I conducted in Poland and in the UK in 2012 and 2013 as part of my doctoral research. The sample consisted of refugees from 1948 and their descendants — people born and brought up in refugee camps, people who managed to avoid the camp experience, children born in the UK to parents who were exiled Palestinians and children of migrants from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Diasporic trajectories and conceptions of 'return'

Interviewees not only defined their relationships with Palestine in diverse ways, but also 'located' their homelands in different geographies and temporalities. One of the first observations that emerged was that the differences and similarities in the ways of narrating "homeland" and "return" among the research participants depended more on the type of diasporic journey than on their age, gender or social position. Following that, I decided to develop a generational grid for analyzing the narratives, in which, following Karl Mannheim, I defined "generation" as a set of meaningful experiences shared by a group of people rather than common socio-demographic criteria. Using this conceptualization I traced three 'diasporic generations.'

1. 'The Exiles'

Participants in this group shared the experience of being severely affected by the consequences of the Nakba – the physical displacement, psychological trauma and degradation of living conditions. They were brought up surrounded by the stories of the idealized life that their ancestors had lived back in Palestine. These romanticized pictures of a lost homeland remained in sharp contrast with the harsh realities of exile. For them the only Palestine they ever knew was a Palestine of absence. Many of them had never been allowed to even visit Israel/Palestine.

Figure . 1 | Ibrahim holding a photo of pre-1948 Haifa taken by his father

Going back to what Haifa was - there is no such thing […] I know that the Haifa to which I return will not be the same as I remember.

Ibrahim, architect, left Haifa as a 6-year-old

Many members of this group understood the idea of return as a possibility of finding a sense of 'at-homeness' in Palestine/Israel. They saw the Right of Return as their personal, individual right that could not be taken away from them. Reclaiming this right was perceived as a way of reclaiming the emotional ownership of the land. It was also recognized as gaining a possibility to call a place "home" after so many years of denying

the Nakba. Reclaiming the Right of Return did not necessarily mean physical return. Most interviewees from this group were bitterly aware of the difficulty of actual return. They realized that the situation on the ground had changed so much that there was no possibility of returning to "their" Palestine, which was linked not only to the specific geography, but also to a specific time. They viewed the emerging Palestine of the Palestinian Authority as a political space of Palestinian sovereignty, but its creation was not considered an act of reclaiming home. For most, "return" meant first of all emotional recognition of pre-1948 Palestine within present-day Israel – acknowledgement of Palestinian presence and history as well as of Israeli accountability for the events of 1948. For many interviewees a symbolic moment of realizing their Right of Return would be visiting Israel not as a tourist or an intruder, but as a person visiting her own land, a fellow citizen.

2. 'Outcasts of the Occupation'

Figure .2 | Palestinian boys at Zaytoun checkpoint

Most of the interviewees from this group left the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a direct or indirect result of the ongoing occupation. While most did not share the canonical Nakba experience, many were equally prevented from returning to their homes. Some of them referred to themselves as victims of 'quiet ethnic cleansing.' Their ideas of Palestine were less romanticized and more related to the daily realities of occupation. For many interviewees, the First Intifada served as a generational experience that informed their relationship to Palestine.

For interviewees in this group the ideas of return had a less ideological and more pragmatic character. As opposed to 1948 Palestinians who often hold on to ideological return in the absence of tangible return options, participants in this group were more likely to focus on practical dimensions of potential returns, and were conditioning them on the emergence of political and economic opportunities. Bitterly aware of the situation on the ground, for them, 1948 Palestine was gone. They were concentrated on holding on to what was still possible to maintain. Some of them were returning to the West Bank and East Jerusalem (and to a lesser extent, Gaza) on a more or less regular basis. These return visits would often arouse mixed feelings: On one hand they were happy to see their families, on the other they had to face the realities of the occupation. For many of them it was the departure from Palestine that made them aware of the scale of oppression under which they had been living. For them, actual return would mean returning to homes that were no longer occupied.

When I cross the [Allenby] Bridge… it's hard to explain … it's like hugging your mother again…
Lana, journalist, originally from Nablus, lives in London

Where shall I return? To that prison? I can no longer live in that prison after having smelled freedom.
Mohammed, born in Gaza, lives in London

3. 'Children of the Idea of Palestine'

Research participants from this group were already born or brought up in host countries in the Middle East. Their understanding of Palestinian dispossession was different from that of their parents' generation. Many did not relate to the Nakba in terms of personal displacement or a personal sense of loss. For them, the events of the 1948 war and subsequent exile of their families were more about injustice. Many of them referred to historic Palestine as their ancestral homeland, while referring to the place where they lived or where their families were currently living as their actual home. Some of them "woke up to Palestine" following political events like 9/11 or 7/7[1], which often served as bitter reminders of their difference within Western societies. For many of them Palestine emerged as a political and moral cause.

Many members of this group understood the idea of return as a symbolic restitution of Justice - acknowledgement of the injustice suffered by the older generation. Hence, the Right of Return rarely had a physical 'address.' It was important as a cause, on both the symbolic and moral level. Many of my

[1] The 7 July 2005 London bombings (often referred to as 7/7) were a series of coordinated suicide attacks in London which targeted civilians using the public transport system during the morning rush hour.

interviewees in this group travelled to Palestine for shorter or longer periods. These visits (or stays) were important for them in terms of reconnecting with Palestinian people, culture and politics. In many cases, however, they implied the realization that while Palestine was an important part of their heritage it was not necessarily a place that they would or could call home, or where they could feel fully at home.

Figure .3 | Wiktor, Polish Palestinian from Łódź in front of his favorite cafe

Returns rather than return

The discussion of return cannot be analyzed in isolation, but in recognition of diverse diasporic trajectories. I wish to conclude by advocating a pluralistic understanding of return. Rather than thinking in terms of the Right of Return as a singular idea, I propose thinking about it in terms of 'returns' – as a multiplicity of physical and symbolic journeys back to Palestine/Israel which allow returnees to recognize and accommodate a diversity of diasporic experiences. This pluralistic understanding could offer a more accessible and inclusive point of departure for both Palestinians and Israelis in thinking about the return process – both as symbolic reconciliation and as accommodating return visits and physical returns.

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A Society of Peace is Possible in Israel/Palestine

Dr. Erella Shadmi

Peace is not the end of war, a treaty, demilitarized zones or walls. Peace is our daily and genuine way of life that we can choose at any moment – if we prefer a life of cooperation, relationships, caring, and responsibility.

Let us paint a picture of a society of peace. Indeed, we are talking here about a different paradigm: Looking at the possibilities for peace from a different point of view. As such, my description might be treated with ridicule or perceived as naïve. Yet, it may open the way to new possibilities and discourses. All that are needed are an open heart, attention, and drive. Not much.

I believe that we, Israelis and Palestinians, are facing a new dawn, having been given the opportunity to experiment and create a different world – by liberating ourselves from the true dictators: Patriarchy, capitalism, nationalism, statehood, religions, and power relations (based on nationality, gender, ethnicity, race, generations or geography). These true dictators, the heritage of Western ideologies and thinking, explain the relative failure of the peace accords between Israel and Palestine, Egypt and Jordan, the only partial success of the post–Apartheid regime in South Africa, as well the grim situation of African-Americans despite their liberation from slavery and the North-American ethos of equality and liberalism. Not surprisingly, as far as I know, all approaches to peace in the Middle East overlook those dictators; in fact, accept them as given.

Sources of Inspiration

My proposal is an attempt to think outside the Eurocentric box and is inspired by the following sources:

- **The gift economy** that underlies the exchange economy and begins, as suggested by Genevieve Vaughn, with motherly gift-giving, oriented to the child's needs. It also includes free water, air and light provided by nature; friendship; Wikipedia, and the many free and forced gifts given by the poor to the wealthy world and by laborers to their employers.
- **The legacy of matriarchy** as articulated by Heide Göttner-Abendroth and others – societies of peace, balance, sharing and equality that exist today (like the Mosuo in China or the Minangkabau in Indonesia) and that existed in the pre-patriarchal age.
- **Indigenous thought –** especially Satyagraha, which means, according to Gandhi, the power of truth or power of spirit as a nonviolent means of resolving conflicts and wars; and Ubuntu, meaning "I am because I belong." Humanity is founded on deep mutual interdependence – the individual is always in relationships, never in solitude, so that community and its preservation are essential to individual liberty and security. All strangers are welcome as well.
- **The subsistence perspective –** a worldview that goes beyond economics, suggesting that the capitalistic goal of goods production will be replaced by the goal of satisfying human needs and life production.
- **Contemporary spirituality –** the interconnectedness between the individual, the community, the planet and the world as rooted in human existence will be recognized: Every part of nature – human or not human, living, growing or inanimate – is sacred; individuals exist as part of their surroundings (rather than in adversarial relations with others).
- Finally, the **Jewish legacy,** central to which is a community with values of mutual assurance and communal responsibility, is crucial.

This non-Western thinking suggests an alternative system of values, structures and conduct founded on needs, communalism, inclusion, spirituality, reconciliation and balance. If these should find their way into the peace dialogue, then issues such as borders, the status of Jerusalem, the refugees and the occupation will be resolved with relative ease.

Israel/Palestine of peace and balance

Based on this system, I wish to propose an alternative political order between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, whose building blocks are a network of local communities, shared spaces, balance and consensual politics.

- **All will equally and fully participate:** PLO, Hamas, settlers, peaceniks, Zionists and anti–Zionists, Mizrahim, the poor, women, transgender persons…

    As only the intimate community allows belonging (Ubuntu), responsibility (meaning both response-ability and backing, standing behind), need-orientation, secure childrearing and a sense of security (my security depends on yours), society will be built upon a **network of local and sovereign**

communities, culturally autonomous and economically independent, that autonomously define their affinity – the common ground of each (either on the basis of their identity, such as Christian-Palestinian, Israeli-Palestinian, or Jewish ultra-Orthodox, or on the basis of a common interest such as urban communities and secular liberalism). These communities will be interconnected by regions, national identities and the statist framework. Each community will be autonomous yet open to others, respect all other communities and have an independent ability to sustain itself (thus, knowledge may be considered a resource that can be given or sold).

Assuming that nationality will still be perceived as important, local communities may choose to be connected to regional and national (Israeli or Palestinian) identities. Such national identity, however, will not require shared borders but rather a shared consciousness.

An ultra-Orthodox religious community may preserve its character – even though it does not respect human and women's rights. Change will not occur by coercion from outside but by way of dialogue with other communities in the region and by the independent awakening of women and other oppressed groups.

Other than that, within each local community, region and state, civil rights, human rights and women's rights will be fully preserved, and the community, region and state will not infringe upon them. At the same time, community members will be committed to the preservation of the community and therefore will contribute as much as they can to the community.

Each community will live within its capabilities, refrain from over-exploiting its natural and human resources, satisfy as much as possible the human needs of all its inhabitants, produce food locally and communally and be based on an endless cycle of gift-giving and receiving, mutual assistance, sharing, communalism and collective work. Responsibility shared among community members as well as among the different communities will ensure true liberty resulting from the knowledge that the person is never forsaken.

- **Balance among the various communities** will be established by the following means: First, real and virtual common spaces will be formed between the local communities and regions (such as the town square – the ancient Greek agora) where all issues will be discussed and decided.

  Second, conflicts will be resolved by nonviolent means only.

  Third, all community, regional and state decisions will be made by consensus. Decision-making by consensus will not take much time once people get used to it. Also, with the help of the internet, it can be done rather easily. This way, a deeper democracy will be achieved, one that goes beyond the democracy practiced in the West which is built on elections and numbers.

  Fourth, a balance of resources and relations – society will be built on layers of cross-relations among the communities through, for example, multiple belonging (linking different communities); multiple economies or sectors existing side-by-side and operating according to different rationalities, yet complementary and mutually supporting each other, including the public, private and third sectors and the gift economy; and control of resources (e.g., PLO controls water resources; Tel Aviv, Haifa, Gaza and Ashdod control access to the sea and harbors; control of knowledge) and so forth. Balancing of resources together with consensual decision-making will ensure that power is cooperatively shared.

  Last but not least, balance will be achieved by including other communities in celebrations, rituals and gift-giving. The spiritual and gifting cycles will create equal – but not identical – communities of sharing, and ensure that the community is never abandoned.

Right of Return

Such a proposal opens up various possibilities for implementing the Palestinian Right of Return: Rebuilding Palestinian communities in their historic locations (as long as they are not presently occupied); building communities in new locations between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River; and joining together existing communities that suit the needs, affinities and interests of returning Palestinians.

In the post-conflict era, a period of transition will begin during which the following matters must be dealt with: Building urban and rural communities; agreeing on reparations to Palestinian refugees and establishing truth and reconciliations commissions to voice the various narratives and facilitate dialogue.

Conclusion

My sources of inspiration are taken from other worlds, yet they would not sound that strange to us if we acknowledge the matriarchal legacy of us all and its traces in Judaism and other faiths. The same goes for the gift economy, which operates in the shadow of patriarchal-capitalist society and which is the solid foundation on which a different society can emerge – and in fact is already emerging these days. Indeed, because these sources of inspiration are far away from the forces of war and violence prevalent in the region and the world at large, as well as the common Western and Eurocentric approaches, they enable us to generate new thinking regarding war and peace. I suggest here a new perspective that perhaps will not be adopted in all its details, yet allows us to embark upon a new conceptual world and a new path to peace in the Middle East.

Dr. Erella Shadmi **if a feminist, peace activist and scholar. Her books include** *Thinking As A Woman: Women and Feminism in Israel; Fortified Land: Police, Policing and the Politics of Personal Security in Israel; and The Mother's Way: Liberating Ourselves Through Motherhood* **(forthcoming).**

The Nakba or
Post-Utopia as a Model for Multi-Existence[1]

Aïm Deüelle Lüski

1.

My first argument regarding the new situation is that the Palestinian concern or "cause" is different from the specific refugee problem encapsulated by the term "Nakba," in that it cannot end with the termination of the occupation/expulsion and the advent of the era of Return, as it is independent of existential questions or this or that political situation; in other words, it is not affected by events related to Bibi or Barak, Rabin or Arafat, since it lies beyond the political and historical. The Nakba is an idea, it is what enables us to distinguish between the historical, political and metaphysical, and it is what orients thinking to differentiate between the phenomenal and the essential: Just like the concept of the 'subject' or the concept of the 'good,' the Nakba is an Archimedean point which identifies me as one who is "Nakba," just as "I" used to be associated with subjectivity or citizenship, or "rationality." Just as "I" am conscious, am Nakba, am the one who says that being-refugee, being-defenseless, "being-less" is my essential existential situation which identifies me and differentiates me internally, as a basis for what will erase the national differences, for example. The Nakba-ite is not a homeowner, and is neither a victim as "being-occupier" or "being-occupied" (the two victimhoods created by colonial violence). This basic situation is also that which differentiates me externally, in both the material and political sense, in the sense that being "Nakba," as opposed to being a "citizen," means above all identifying the communal dimension as that around which the group can unify — the group of people living in a certain place.

I suggest that instead of desiring "freedom" or "equality" or "emancipation" or "rights," the community which subscribes to the concept of "Nakba" seeks above all to strive, before anything else, to study the Nakba text and discourse as a basis for cooperation, the history of that particular event as a basis for personal growth, in education for example.

2.

In suggesting this I seek to present the word's modus operandi, that of the concept "the Palestinian problem," which has already exceeded its boundaries (1948 or 1967) to become a universal concept in Alain Badiou's sense, an essential conceptual-ontological question that deals with a different understanding of being out of Nakba: Just like Agamben understands in a completely historical way the reality of the present out of the "camp" situation, we understand reality out of the "Nakba" situation, which is quite different from his camp situation. To briefly outline Agamben's argument, it could be said that to him, the camp is more than a closed compound (territory) housing people for whom law has been suspended — as in a refugee camp — but the camp becomes the hidden matrix of political space: In other words, we are all *homo sacer* — we all live an exposed life, as Agamben sees it, such that the law could become suspended for us at any moment regardless of the sequence of the events of our life in the liberal world, for example. The camp is a model of the unusual situation which, although signifying the exceptional, does so only apparently, since that exception, which used to be truly uncommon, became, despite its unusualness, the prototype of our present life. Citizenship and *homo sacer* merge when we are all becoming potentially exposed citizens, in that dimension where everyone has become part of an exposedness epitomized by the state's biopower in the late capitalist age, by state control management techniques that are also applied through ostensibly civilian mechanisms such as Google, Twitter or Facebook.[2]

But the way I see it, Agamben was not precise enough, and left the camp concept too ambiguous in too many contexts. Therefore, after having made some headway, the camp concept will be contrasted with the Nakba concept. The difference lies in the fact that in Nakba, there is no "law suspension" situation as in the refugee camps observed by Agamben, the post-1945 concentration and displaced person camps. Agamben's discussion fails to sufficiently address the question of language, to understand the role played by the language spoken in the camp, which is different and whose role differs from one camp to another — therefore, there is no "camp" where the "Nakba" is, there are only names: al-Jalazun, Shuafat, al-Yarmouk, Balata, Dheisheh, Qalandia, Shati', Nuseirat, Deir al-Balah, etc. That is Nakba. It is not a "camp," but rather al-Jalazun, which is different from Shuafat, which in turn is different from Deir al-Balah, since otherness consistently appears within the concept of Nakba itself, which is unstable, creating multiplicity and multiplicities in discourse and language, which is not uniform. In each becoming-Nakba-Shuafat or becoming-Nakba-Jabalia lies the question of resistance produced by language vis-à-vis another memory produced by Occupation in its 65 years of control. In each lies a communality created by language between the residents of this particular camp who are indeed "defenseless" in Agamben's terms, but their defenselessness is not identical across camps. In the camp, a discourse has emerged which deals with the problem of appropriate control through language, or in my formulation — the non-control broken due to the chain of distinct signifiers which is maintained, not by the victimizer but by the victim, through the continuity of language between before and after, on the

one hand, and on the other through the particular difference created in each of the Nakba's various modes of becoming wherever it was born, whether in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria or Jordan. It is that language which is created in the camp and learned by its residents that turns the emergency situation of their exposed lives into a sustained and intensifying system, empowered by language, and thus gets to evade and avoid submitting to the condition of de-subjectivization which the sovereign seeks to establish in the camp. In this sense, the Stalinist sovereign or the Nazi sovereign, the Israeli or Darfurian sovereign, are also distinct and make almost redundant the sweeping use of the camp concept, which must be replaced by "becoming-Nakba-Darfur," etc. Whereas it was Yiddish which preserved the human dimension in the camps, here I continue this structure by claiming that the Nakba — although naturally also encapsulating the emergency situation and the ongoing becomingness of what is becoming there, due to the expulsion, the physically restricted space of emergency dictated for them as their new residential space (space of exception) — has been enabling the construction of the conceptual memory of the second home, following the destruction of the first.

3.

Language is there as the conceptual event within the emergency situation which repeatedly challenges the perpetuation of the emergency situation itself, an event in which the sovereign has lost its right to manage the emergency, and no longer dictates the situation as a result of its declaration of the emergency situation. The Nakba language posits the sovereign as helpless against the empowerment through the concept which speaks through the continuously spoken language — in this case, Arabic — which is becoming the exposed subject's spatial defense. The Nakba opposite the camp says that not only have the Nakba citizens been weak or defenseless, but on the contrary, in terms of the communal language imparted in the camp they have generated a new force called "Nakba," which we are hereby conceptualizing as a basis for the post-utopian condition. As opposed to the utopian relation constituted by Agamben through his discussion of the camp and the Muselmann,[3] the Nakba is not a place, like the camp, but an event, or situation — and unlike the camp, it is a particular ontological situation that has created the multiple resistance and the multiple perseverance towards its becoming a universal concept that makes, in this case, the sovereignty designated "Israel" completely redundant.

4.

I am completely Maoist-Leninist: A common consciousness must be allowed to be designed top-down, relying on a virtual memory which is not real for any of the parties involved (since it all happened long ago), but using a shared historical store through which we can learn about the joint suffering without distinction. Practically, for example, if we superimpose the map of Palestine with its occupied and abandoned villages over the map of Europe with the abandoned villages of the Jews forced onto the death trains, we can think about a combined structure of learning and memory. And this is only an initial stage in the construction of a shared memory-suffering narrative that will at first be told in the two languages that will eventually be merged into one. This is my vision. In order to enable this structure, I proceed to partially apply ideas suggested by Ariella Azoulay, who assumes a universal situation of civic gazing, through which we can develop the question of whether the shared, civic gazing in the picture will enable them to talk in Hebrew and Arabic — as they already have, long ago in Spain, at a place and age called Andalus, where they managed to produce a shared, multilingual and multi-identity existence while skipping and bridging any gaps between them.

Will the civilian state emerging from the cooperation inherent in observing the photograph help us in the deconstruction to the humanistic-universalist conditions of comprehensibility under which the Nakba is understood as a calamity of nationality? The Nakba, according to this view, is the tragedy of particularism, the end moment of the nation-state illusion, the place where the division into sovereign nations failed. The division into nation state, that national pluralism, involved the violence of annihilating whoever will not be recognized at all as a nation ("there is no Palestinian people"): This violence is inherent to "nation-building," and it is violence over the zero-term "nationality." Hence, we must abandon, according to this view, the (pluralistic) particularism which conditions national division, and move on to a super-national system, neither Jewish nor Palestinian, where even the particular histories of the different nations is worked through — by means of sublimation and transcendence — and abstracted into a non-national space of comprehensiveness. No Independence Day, no Nakba, and neither Independence Day/Nakba (as a day commemorating both events at the same time), but a different independence, an independence of sharing and observing a store of true memories, imagined photographs or texts, is what will posit the Nakba as a dark twin of the Holocaust, which will be commemorated in the future, according to this view, by those living between the Jordan and Mediterranean.

[3] *Muselmann* (from the German, meaning Muslim) was a derogatory term used among captives of World War II Nazi concentration camps to refer to those suffering from a combination of starvation and exhaustion and who were resigned to their impending death [editor].

5.

We attach considerable importance to the term Nakba, which began taking root as an extension and complement to the term Holocaust. There is some kind of double-bind symmetry between the two terms, and as long as one of them, Holocaust, dominated the discursive field, the term "facing it" (in Levinas' terminology), Nakba, had no room, and could not come to terms with its own truth. The relations between those two terms interest me as a starting point for a discussion of languages and the relations between the two nations and languages, particularly of the possibility we seek to explore here: How we can stop thinking through the national model that creates a double face à face nationality, where one is necessarily at the expense of the other, and think about a single structure, not of nationality but of a shared identity which is the Semite identity.

6.

To conclude, as opposed to the thought-about issues such as "transitional justice" and systems of compensation and reconciliation, whereby the historical and human givens lying there do not enable them to enable progress, I seek to suggest the schizo-lingual option which could help us in the future to overcome the Bermuda triangle of modern thought — identity, nationality and ethnicity. This triangle, I want to argue, prevents radical-critical thought from arriving at alternative forms of reconciliation, of practical options beyond compensation and towards structures of possible, shared community existence. Modern thought results in such oppression of creativity that we are unable to overcome the dichotomous models of victimizer-victimized, occupier-occupied, Jew-Arab, Israeli-Palestinian, justice-injustice, etc. Here I am less interested in developing such liberal models, but rather seek to propose heterotopies which are not based on restitution, identity-building or maintaining the nationality principle. Precisely where the gaps relying on the modern triangle are only growing, postmodern thinking seeks to transcend the structure sanctified by the Zionist State, of forming a modern identity founded on national and ethnic unity and revolving around the empowerment of private property and ownership rights, and liberate and set free the function of nationality, attachment to the land, and insistence on property compensation and the lost attachment to the ground.

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Cultural Return as a Response
to the Limits of Postcolonial Discourse on Return

Roi Zilberberg

In this talk I examine the postcolonial framework through which we approach the Right of Return in peace education. I will suggest two theoretical problems with this framework: First, the rigidity and one-dimensionality of the postcolonial conception of justice; and second, the trap we fall into when we frame identities in an essentialist manner. In what follows, I propose an alternative approach to promoting and realizing the Right of Return, through what I call the "cultural return" approach. This perspective is not in conflict with activities to promote actual return to Palestine. Rather, the approach emphasizes that culture is an ongoing and dynamic process, whose content and boundaries are constantly changing.

Discourse on return largely derives from a postcolonial worldview. The postcolonial perspective is an excellent tool for analyzing political situations, and it can teach us much about reality. In the specific context of return, postcolonial theory views the Nakba as the culmination of the colonial process in Palestine — a manifestation of the power relations between Zionists and Palestinians, and more broadly, of the power relations between the West and the Arab world. This perspective enables us to recognize the decisive impact of historical context, and to see beyond the illusion of universality that is embedded in Western conceptions of justice. As such, it raises our awareness of the arbitrary and unjust division of resources, and of the urgent need for change.

The postcolonial perspective directly engages the problem of inequality in cultural power. Both Said[1] and Spivak,[2] for example, discuss cultural imperialism: The use of imperial force to privilege one culture and stifle the development of another. It is also commonly agreed that US global influence is due not only to its military and economic power, but also to its capacity for cultural oppression. This approach can also be applied to power relations in the context of return. Cultural return would be an act of resisting cultural oppression, designed to overcome colonial power relations and develop a prosperous culture that is able to influence and interact with other cultures on an equitable basis.

Despite the soundness of the cultural approach and its logical compatibility with the postcolonial perspective, there are, as I have said, two inherent obstacles in the postcolonial return discourse, which preclude cultural return as a course of action. The first is its rigid and one-dimensional concept of justice. Postcolonial justice will be achieved by rolling back the colonial act. Abu Sitta, who addressed us through video conference, represents this understanding of justice. In his view, justice will be achieved by reversing the war crime of ethnical cleansing.

This is highly problematic. History's handwriting cannot be erased. The phenomenon of refugeehood cannot be reversed, even by way of return. Any thought of erasing the past or any attempt to imagine what would have happened had certain events not occurred are not productive and have no moral basis. This concept of justice is not only rigid, but also one-dimensional in terms of identifying the perpetrator and victim. It reduces the question of justice to a particular matter between the Palestinian and Jewish national movements. Nationality becomes the main criterion for evaluating the colonial process; in other words, it is a national crime perpetrated by one nation against another. Moreover, nationality becomes the main force motivating the quest for justice. The prevailing assumption is that Palestinian national revival, culminating in sovereignty over ancestral lands, is justice epitomized. Importantly, the problem here is not national aspiration in itself, but the essentialist approach to nationality that it expresses, on which I will elaborate below.

The colonial "game" is also characterized by a one-dimensional and stereotypical division of roles between actors. The Western actor will always be cast in the role of oppressor, with members of other cultures cast as victims. An illustration of this stereotypical fixation occurred at the 2001 World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa. Postcolonial discourse was very salient at that conference, among other things due to the active involvement of civil society organizations. One of the main issues addressed at the conference was slavery. However, while participants broadly discussed the problem of the transatlantic slave trade, they made no reference to the sub-Saharan slave trade, despite the fact that the latter was at least as extensive as the former in certain historical periods. The main difference between the two was that in the sub-Saharan slave trade, African slaves were sold within Africa and the Middle East, mainly by Arab traders. Eventually, the conference Declaration recognized the transatlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity, with several Western countries acknowledging their responsibility for this crime. The sub-Saharan slave trade received no mention.[3]

[1] Saïd, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.
[2] Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak? " *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Chicago: University of Illinois, 1988.
[3] United Nations. *Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.* January 2, 2002.

When the concept of justice is so rigid, it begs the question: What are the morally legitimate means of achieving justice? Fanon,[4] for one, argued that violence by the victim is legitimate because it is no more than a reflection of the colonizer's violence. In the context of the Palestinian national cause and discourse on return, the dilemma of using violence as part of the struggle for liberation is highly relevant and has not been sufficiently discussed.

The cultural return perspective views the very struggle for liberation as a cultural development, where the struggle becomes an important part of the developing culture. Thus, the nature of the struggle cannot be determined solely according to arguments of justice or political legitimacy. The justifications for violence should be critically examined in light of its possible sociocultural influences.

To conclude, a rigid and one-dimensional concept of justice is an obstacle to return.

The second theoretical obstacle, which in my view impedes the cultural return approach, is essentialist identity. An essentialist identity is one that is assumed to be fixed and never-changing — whose content, or whose meaning for the subject, remain constant. A Jew is a Jew and will always be one. The Haggadah text read every Passover states: "In every generation one is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt." The same holds for the Palestinians and the Nakba. Not only Palestinian-ness, but also refugeehood is an essentialist identity. Even the definition of a Palestinian is determined by the timing of the colonialist act: All Arabs who lived in Palestine in 1948 are considered Palestinians, regardless of their choice or preference. Within the framework of such an essentialist concept, any influence by one culture on another is considered part of the colonialist crime. Personally, I find this situation quite depressing. A Jew interested in Palestinian culture is considered an Orientalist in search of superficial exotics or seeking just to "know the enemy." Conversely, a Palestinian interested in Jewish/Israeli culture may be considered deficient in national identity, a traitor almost.

This brings us to the term normalization. Many argue that any form of cooperation, mutual influence or even contact between Jews and Palestinians help the occupiers to solidify the false pretense that occupation is normal, or that occupation is conducive to peace. This argument is often used to discredit various cultural activities and dialogues involving Palestinians and Jews, including even joint political activism. I believe the anti-normalization campaign is designed, among other things, to preserve essentialist identities and to prevent mutual cultural influence between Jews and Palestinians.

I will give you an example of the way the anti-normalization campaign sometimes operates. About a year ago, a group of Jews and Palestinians planned a joint trip to a concert by the Lebanese rock band Mashrou' Leila in Amman, Jordan. When word of this came out, some of the reactions were furious. The Jerusalem NGO alQaws condemned the joint trip and specifically named each of the Palestinian participants, whose identities were publicized. A Palestinian refugee association in Amman published a letter warning that it would bar Jews from entering the concert, and that all entrants to the after-party would be individually screened. Eventually, some of the Jews did cancel their trip and the after-party was called off well. But belligerent, essentialist discourse continued, also on the Jewish side. About a month after the episode, some of the Jewish participants used their Facebook accounts to condemn a certain dialogue project, and claimed that Jewish-Palestinian dialogues in general are normalization projects designed mostly to assuage Jewish participants' guilt.

Cultural return deals with the limitations of the discourse described here by facilitating an alternative space where return is enabled in a variety of senses, even if not in the strictly physical sense. Cultural return is not essentialist and therefore does not seek to recapture Palestinian culture as it used to exist before the Nakba, frozen in the past. Rather, cultural return promotes a developing, vivid culture. The alternative space, whether physical or 'virtual,' enables an equitable cultural discourse in which Palestinian culture can articulate itself and impact the environment from which it was expelled, the environment where it has been continually suppressed until today. This space also provides the conditions for a hybrid culture of return, integrating some characteristics of Israeli culture while granting the possibility of living in a post-return, shared space.

The space for cultural return is, ideally, a home for a community whose very existence represents an alternative. This community will inspire and prove the feasibility of return, while manifesting its advantages and challenges in the most practical sense. For the refugees, cultural return will be an intermediate stage where the viability of cultural integration between the returnees and those currently inhabiting the space of return will be explored. Undoubtedly, return is a powerful and potentially traumatic process. Cultural return can reduce the fear of change by creating a shared space for all parties involved. Thus, Jews will gain the opportunity to realize that return does not mean the destruction of Jewish life and becoming a cultural minority, but an alternative which offers many advantages.

[4] Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1966.

An essentialist concept of identity is obviously incompatible with cultural return. In order to facilitate such an approach, we would have to transform our discourse. This is no mean feat, and in order to do so we must emphasize the importance of a cultural approach to return. The first reason that cultural return is important is that this is an inclusive approach, where every person can find a place — a refugee in a camp in Amman, a Jew in Tel Aviv, or an internally displaced person from the destroyed village of Safuriyya currently living in Nazareth. All can take part in the effort to promote return through this approach, and perhaps also collaborate for that purpose. This course of action can become an integral part of our lives — return as a way of life. The second reason is political: Cultural return will ensure that at least some of our efforts are independent of political forces. The essence we are dealing with is culture, whose key quality is its ability to develop and cross borders without a passport or a visa.

Cultural return is not inconsistent with physical return, but actually enables it in many respects. Cultural return provides a mechanism for transformation that can affect the lives of anyone involved, as well as the broader reality.

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Planning the Return: Blueprints of Refugee Return

Michal Ran-Rubin

The Right of Return for Palestinian refugees has long been recognized under international law. And yet, both in political negotiations and in civil society actions, most discussions continue to be limited to its role as an abstract, legal principle. As a result, the pragmatics of how return can be achieved are too often ignored. Despite the failure of international institutions to move beyond a purely juridical approach to the question of return, in recent years we have witnessed a growing trend of organic Palestinian mobilization towards the realization of return in practice. Whether in the return of Palestinian refugees to Iqrit or the production of detailed plans for the future resettlement of al-Lajjun, we are witnessing the emergence of new spatial strategies aimed at advancing the return of Palestinian refugees.

In this article, I examine how efforts to use urban planning as a means for contesting spatial rights can also facilitate new visions of return. In order to situate the potential significance of urban planning methods in facilitating return, I begin with a brief review of the historical context for this project.

Background

This project focuses on the practical needs and demands relevant to planning for return today. It builds directly on the conceptual groundwork laid out by scholars such as Salman Abu Sitta. Abu Sitta superimposes the historical topographical data from Palestinian villages depopulated in 1948 onto contemporary planning maps of Israeli built-up areas. In so doing, he has been able to show that, in many cases, depopulated Palestinian villages remain vacant even today. These empirical facts demonstrate that structural, spatial, and demographic conditions are not a hurdle for refugee return; on the contrary, because so many of the villages targeted by Zionist forces in 1948 were located in the now sparsely populated Galilee region, it is likely that well over 90% of refugees would be able to return to lands that are currently vacant.

This research challenges us to grapple with a host of new questions: What kinds of planning decisions must be undertaken to prepare the areas to which refugees will return? What will these sites of return look like? And how can we ensure that the voices of refugees are not only heard, but play a determining role in the rebuilding of destroyed villages? In other words: What will return look like on a village-by-village scale?

In order to deal with these pressing questions, I worked with Zochrot and internally displaced persons from al-Ruways to develop sketch models for imagining and building towards a future return. We utilized urban planning techniques, mapping, and community planning methods in ways that allowed us to re-envision how these sites could be rebuilt to accommodate returnees.

Envisioning return: al-Ruways

Al-Ruways is a small village in the Western Galilee which had a population of just over 330 people on the eve of the Nakba, according to a 1945 survey. In July 1948, Zionist forces entered al-Ruways, expelling all its residents and destroying homes, property, and agricultural fields in the process.

Today, 90% of the al-Ruways refugees reside in the nearby town of Tamra, located just a few kilometers from their home village. Despite the fact that Tamra's municipal borders extend to lands where al-Ruways once stood, refugees are still denied the right to return to their village, even though they hold blue ID cards and, in theory, are full Israeli citizens. Internally displaced persons within Israel have never been allowed to return to or rebuild their villages, and al-Ruways is no exception.

At the same time, although Israel has sought to afforest much of the village lands, the site of al-Ruways has not been extensively planned or built up since 1948. The absence of planning is visible in a comparison of the two images below, a 1947 aerial photograph of al-Ruways and a satellite image of the same site from 2013 (see Figures 1 and 2, next page).

At the epicenter of the 1947 photo we can detect a cluster of white buildings — the homes of al-Ruways villagers. Branching out from this focal point, we can make out well-defined roads and fields, which together constituted the landscape of the village and its surroundings prior to 1948.

Comparing this pre-1948 image with the contemporary satellite rendering allows us to appreciate the transformations that have taken place since the Nakba, including the destruction of homes, the afforestation of Palestinian lands, and the encroachment of new construction. Nevertheless, the 2013 satellite imagery

confirms that the lands of al-Ruways remain mostly vacant today. It also showcases the state's neglect of this area. As a result, rebuilding the village of al-Ruways will not require tearing down an already existing community site; rather, it will primarily entail the easier task of building on currently unpopulated lands.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Using these materials, I met with refugees from al-Ruways to strategize what it would mean, in practical terms, to start planning for their return. In a series of community planning sessions, a number of critical points emerged:

- **Population changes.** In 1948, al-Ruways had a population of less than 400 people. Since the number of refugees today is exponentially larger, the built environment of a future al-Ruways will need to transform in order to accommodate them. In practical terms, this could mean having to build vertically — e.g., using three-story apartment complexes for residential living — as well as building horizontally. Doing so represents a significant shift from the village's pre-Nakba architectural heritage, where most families owned single-story homes.
- **Green spaces.** The refugees from al-Ruways also emphasized the need to maintain green and open spaces. Public parks, soccer fields, and pedestrian walkways are not merely sites for extracurricular activities; they are crucial zones for cultivating community relations, enabling returnees to inhabit a shared space. As the goal of return is not just physical repatriation but also the re-forging of displaced communities, these common spaces are critical.
- **Facilities.** Last, we discussed the kinds of infrastructures required in a future al-Ruways. We came up with a list of facilities including schools and other educational institutes, a mosque, a health clinic, and a bank. Rebuilding al-Ruways is thus not simply a matter of reinstating its pre-1948 social life but also of building a practical future in which residents have access to education, state services, and a decent quality of life.

Drawing on these insights, we began to create a preliminary visual model. The first step involved outlining roads, walkways, and streets bisecting the village. To generate an image of new roads, we essentially traced the outlines directly from the pre-1948 aerial shot, thus preserving a significant element of al-Ruways' architectural heritage (see Figures 3 and 4). Once we had defined our background this way, we had a canvas upon which to begin planning (Figure 5).

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5
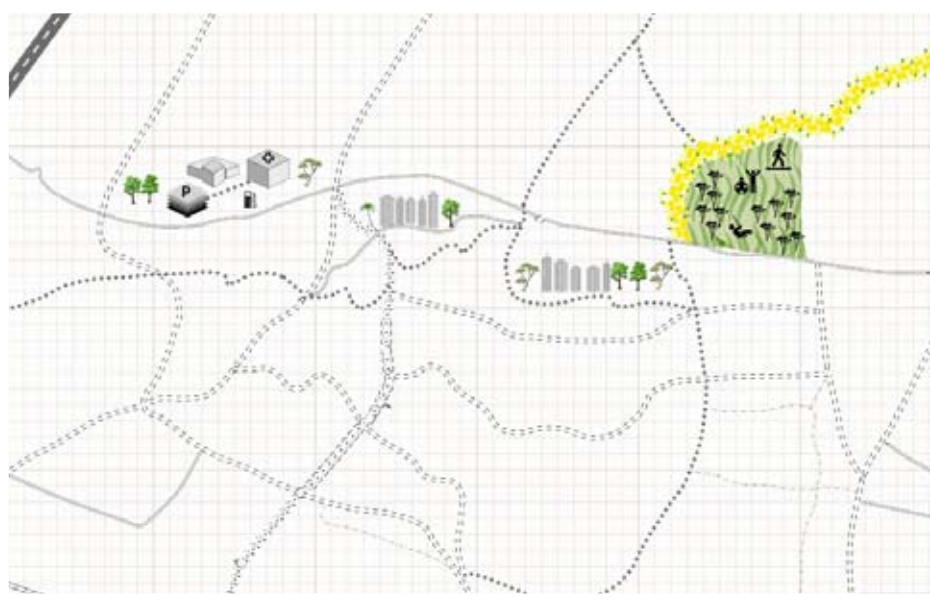
In Figures 6 and 7 we begin to see how some of the aforementioned principles were visually rendered in a preliminary sketch: Green spaces are foregrounded, residential sites are built up using vertical space, pedestrian walkways bisect the village, and a soccer field is centrally located, while key facilities are clustered together at the entrance to the village, not far from a mosque, which we placed next to the site of the original mosque of al-Ruways.

Figure 6

Figure 7

In effect, what emerged from the community planning sessions with al-Ruways' refugees was a pragmatic vision of what future a returnee community might inhabit.

Based on the results of the community planning process, I suggest that the need to maximize vertical space and green space is something we are likely to encounter in other returnee sites. At the same time, the spatial challenges that we experienced while trying to visualize a future for al-Ruways — such as balancing the site's architectural heritage with the need to accommodate a significantly larger population of returning refugees — is also something that any future site will need to grapple with in planning for return.

Conclusion

In the long process of building a home that future generations of refugees can return to, the rebuilt space must take into account the memories of the pre-1948 generation and at the same time embody new principles of community planning. This does not mean, of course, that a rebuilt village today will look identical to its pre-1948 predecessor. But it will need to attend to the lived recollections of destroyed villages together with the contemporary needs of refugees.

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Between Memory and Renewal:
Principles for Designing the Return to al-Lajjun

Shadi Habib-Allah

"By our own hands"

"By our own hands" is the slogan on which we founded our hopes and through which we sought to design a model for our return to our original home. The design of the village of al-Lajjun was carried out as part of the 'Udna ("We're Back!") project, a joint venture of the Baladna Association for Arab Youth, the Arab Institute for Human Rights, the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced and Zochrot. It was sponsored by the HEKS/EPER foundation. The project was aimed at young Palestinians of the third generation after the Nakba, whose families were deported from their homes but not from their homeland — youngsters imagining their return to their evacuated towns and villages. It included five evacuated villages: Saffuriyya, Mi'ar, Iqrit, Ma'alul, and last but not least, al-Lajjun, which was the 'hard core' of the project, a special case in which a group of young people from Umm al-Fahm took part.

Our project aimed to provide a comprehensive plan that would account for the complexities involved in return (al-'Awda) to a particular place, as well as its implications for the Palestinian refugees dispersed since 1948. We drew on research about return — how to plan for it, and how to move from the stage of longing and digging deeply into memory to the stage of concrete action. What will the towns of return look like? How will they handle the demographic increase when deportees return? How will all of this be translated into an actual plan? How will we simultaneously join together the legacy of the deserted villages with people's contemporary needs, including what ensures a respectable life?

Looking to your right from highway 65, as you exit Wadi 'Ara into Marj Ibn 'Amer (Jezreel Valley), between forests stretching out over the hills across the horizon, you will find the deserted village of al-Lajjun, one of the villages close to the town of Umm al-Fahm, formerly part of the Jenin district. It was one of the villages defeated during the 1948 war. Al-Lajjun is located 16 km northwest of Jenin and about 5 km north of Umm al-Fahm. Northwest of al-Lajjun lie the remains of the ancient forest at the top of Tall al-Mutasallim (in Hebrew, Tel Megiddo — "Armageddon"). The village was located on the hills surrounding the al-Lajjun riverbed. Its surroundings abound with springs and fountains, including the al-Khaleel and Sitt Layla fountains.

Al-Lajjun's history goes back to 130 A.D., when it was the site of a Roman military camp. Its name derives from the Latin word for "legion," legio, referring to the army regiment that the Roman Emperor Hadrian deployed here. Later on, al-Lajjun was divided into two parts, east and west. Following a common practice in Palestinian villages, its respective neighborhoods were named after the extended families that resided in them, including Mahajneh, Ighbariyyah, Mahameed and Jabareen, who had moved from Umm al-Fahm to live in al-Lajjun and to till its land, and who rebuilt the village for that purpose. There were six water mills in al-Lajjun, two of which were owned by the Christian families Haddad and Nuwayser, as well as two mosques. One of the mosques was converted into a carpentry shop in the aftermath of the Nakba. The village also had a primary school, a clinic and several cafés. One of the cafés, owned by the Karaman family, had a radio where local people listened to the news and other programs. Al-Lajjun also had a bus company named after the village, owned by Christians and Moslems, and an association in charge of village development and welfare. In 1931 the village had 162 houses, and in 1948 its population numbered 1,280.
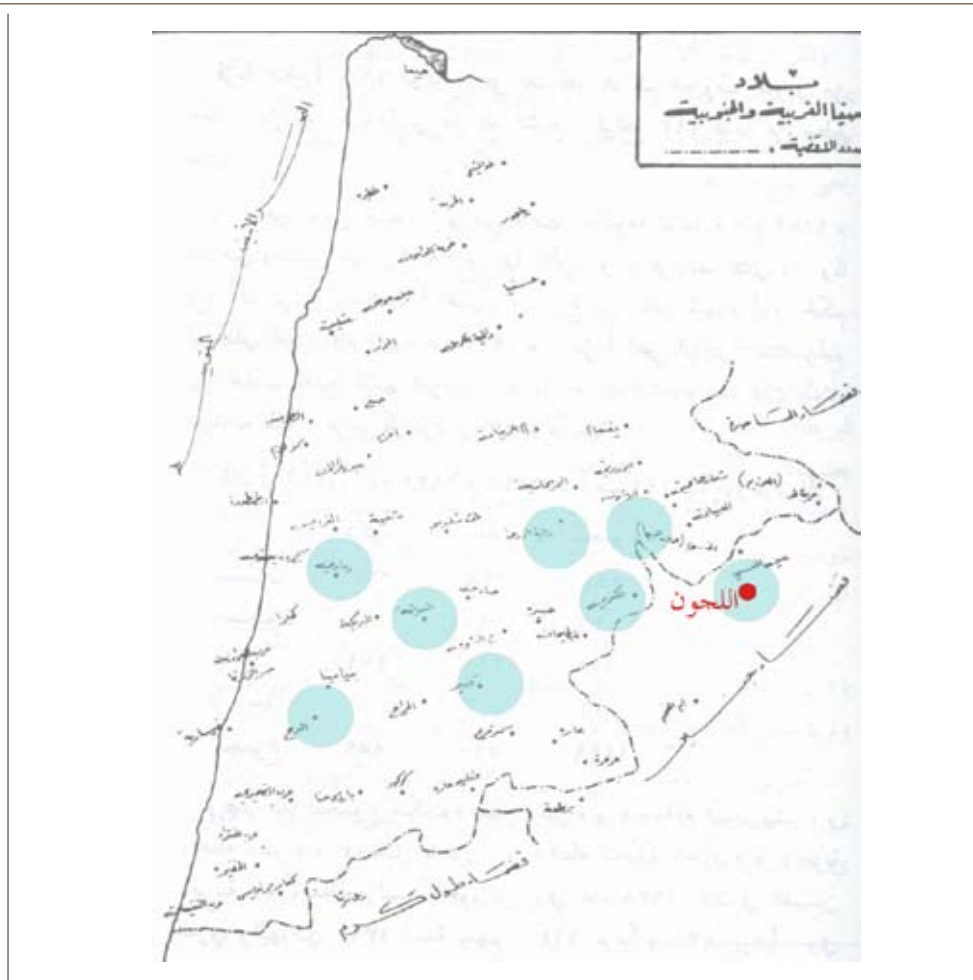
Stage one:
Al-Rawha villages

The first stage of the project started by adapting the general outline suggested by the association of the 34 evacuated villages of the al-Rawha' area (Ramot Menashe), the most famous of which are Sabbarin and al-Sindiyanah. Most of those villages were deserted following direct Zionist attacks and massacres, which were committed in villages such as Sabbarin, Umm al-Shuf, al-Lajjun and Abu Zurayq. Al-Rawha is an elevated strip of land stretching from the Umm al-Fahm hills in the south to Mount Carmel in the north. Its average length is 17 km and its average width is about 13 km. Its total area is 220 km².

The focus of the suggested design is the establishment of several residential sites, each of which includes several neighboring villages which would have spread out and merged if they had not been evacuated. Merging the villages at the original geographical location where all of them once existed together is an act that resonates with the impressions of the place that persist in the minds and souls of the refugees. Thus, the design takes into consideration the need for memory to be located in a particular space and to be linked with the details and visual characteristics of that place (Figure 1 shows the location of al-Lajjun within al-Rawha and the locations of the proposed residential sites).

Figure 1

Location of al-Lajjun village within al-Rawha' and sites of the proposed residential areas

Stage 2:
Al-Lajjun as a model

In the second stage of the project participants collected data on the destroyed village, focusing especially on the built-up areas of the village as they existed in 1948 and on agricultural and historical areas. This analysis was then used as the foundation for the design of a residential area in the historical location of the village, by means of which the Right of Return may be realized by its displaced population. This residential area will also be the destination of return by the inhabitants of the four small villages (khirbah) that used to surround al-Lajjun— al-Fawqa, al-Tahta, al-Qibliyyah and Dhahr al-Dar.

The general outline of the village was marked using data on its size, which spanned 77,242 dunams (7,724 hectares), as well as by a referendum of its former inhabitants, living both in the country and in the diaspora, who number about 16,000 people today.

The design illustrates the possibility of linking al-Lajjun with the towns and villages that surround it, making it an attractive center for the entire area and reviving its active historical role through industry and production. It also renews the central position of al-Lajjun as "Palestine's bread basket" before Israeli occupation. In addition, we affirmed that al-Lajjun play an important academic role by establishing colleges for agricultural research that would attract scholars and provide job opportunities. We also took advantage of al-Lajjun's strategic location as an extension of Marj Ibn 'Amer, by building a central bus station on its outskirts to improve transportation. We proposed to support artistic, educational and social activities, which would contribute to neighboring towns and villages. Al-Lajjun would become the site of a new, interactive space that could act as a link between the north, center, and south of the country (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2

Land area: 77,242 dunams (7,742 hectares)
Population:
471 in 1922
1,103 in 1945
16,000 in 2013
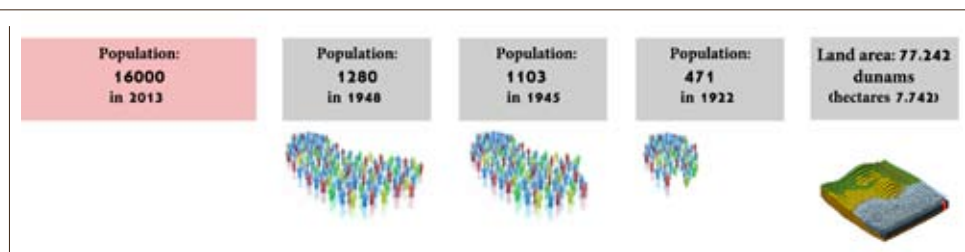
Figure 3

- Marj Ibn Amer — Jezreel Valley
- Agriculture
- Place of connection
- Industry and production, agricultural colleges, development, academic studies, employment
- Al-Lajjun village center — a memory of the place
- Surrounding towns and villages — connection through transportation, promoting employment opportunities
- Residential areas — a contemporary modern city, advanced infrastructure, advanced services, returned villages and renewed connections between them

The following sketches illustrate the area of the village in 1948, in relation to the new residential areas that were proposed. They also emphasize the concept of the village center and its potential links with the surrounding cultural fabric (Figures 4-7).

Figure 4
The location of the village in 1948

Figure 5
The proposed village location and cemetery

Figure 6
Surrounding green areas — gardens and pedestrian paths

Building a new howshor courtyard surrounded by residential areas, that attracts traffic from and directs it to the other areas

Figure 7
Creating a new 'howsh' (courtyard), surrounded by residential areas, which absorbs and disperses traffic to and from other parts of the area

Surrounding green areas – gardens and pedestrian

Stage 3: Al-Lajjun's architectural style and the emotional aspect of space

In the framework of planning the al-Lajjun project an urgent question arose: What will al-Lajjun look like in the near future given the natural growth of the population, the replacement of horizontal architecture by vertical buildings, the destruction of the center which is the heart of the village, the disappearance of familiar landmarks from the past, and the development of close ties with an industrial city? We thought it vitally important to try and recreate the village core and enable its "return" in line with a typical Palestinian Arab village, both with respect to its design and its constituent elements.

The idea behind this project is the creation of a lively hub that will represent the memory of the place by taking memories and old connections with the village into consideration, as well as by preserving the shape of the village and its urban spaces. This will play an important role in averting the emotional shock and profound contradiction between memory and architectural modernity. It will strive to avoid emptying the village from its human, historical and traditional aspects; the material realization of the new village will use a special architectural model different from the rest of the village, drawing on studies regarding the construction of the traditional Palestinian village, its principles and characteristics. The central idea behind this project is to create a lively hub in the village that will materialize the memory of the place. The planning of this hub will take into consideration the dimensions of memory, the longing for scenes from the villages' past, and the preservation of the architectural forms of the village and its settled areas. This place will fulfill an important role in preventing emotional shock, the deep fracture between memory and modern architecture. The human, historical and traditional characteristics that have been emptied from the village will be rematerialized in the village center, using a special architectural style that will differ from that used in the other areas of the village. This style will be based on studies of the building style of the Palestinian village, its constituent elements and its unique qualities. This historical space, in its revised appearance, will include public structures that will provide social and cultural services to residents: A mosque, an art center, a museum, a public library, a youth center, an environmental center, an artisans' workshop, cafés and restaurants, recreation and rest areas.

This idea for the village hub is linked with the idea of the courtyard (*howsh*) in the traditional Palestinian house. We developed the concept of this tiny, warm space into a larger one at the village level. The word *howsh* literally means "space," a place always considered one of the fundamental elements of rural houses in Palestinian villages. It is the meeting point where members of the family gather together. This inspired the overall idea of the project: The creation of a common space surrounded by buildings whose architectural style draws on the basic model of the Palestinian building. In its middle there is a gathering place, shaped like and open amphitheater, for artistic and cultural activities (Figures 8-13).

Figure 8
A preliminary sketch of the idea of the project
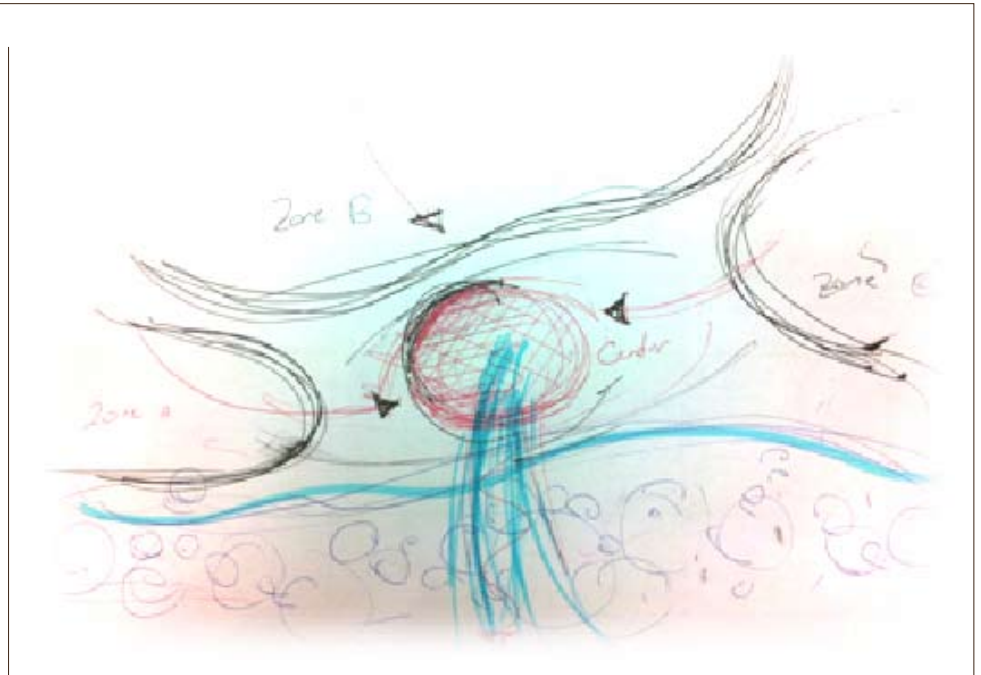
Figures 9
A preliminary sketch of the idea of the courtyard (*howsh*)
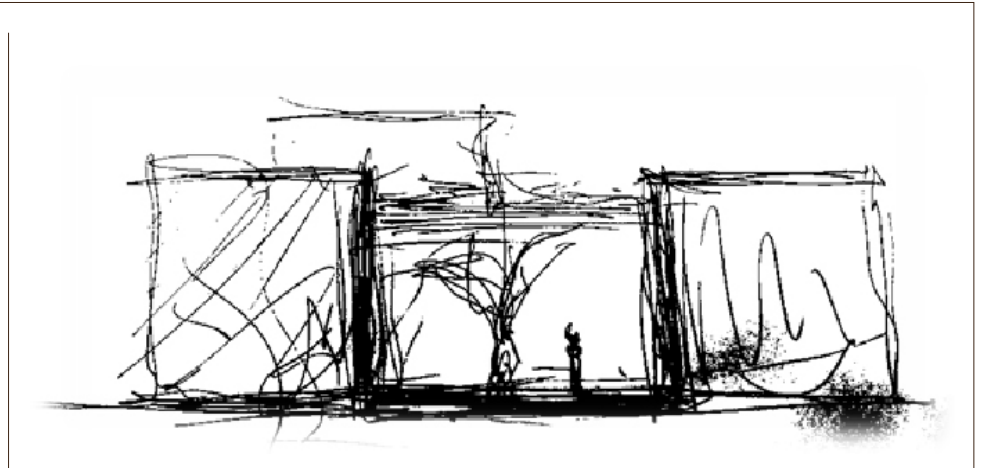
Figure 10
1.   Art center
2.   Vocational training center
3.   Shops
4.   Hotel
5.   Environmental protection association
6.   Mosque
7.   Al-Lajjun museum
8.   Cafés and restaurants
9.   Public amphitheater
10. Café

1 Public amphitheater
2 Cafés and restaurants
3 Art center
4 Vocational training center
5 Shops
6 Public library
7 Environmental
   protection association
8 Al-Lajjun museum
9 Mosque
10 Hotel
11 Bank
12 Information center

Figures 11-13
Visualizations of construction and expansion
areas.
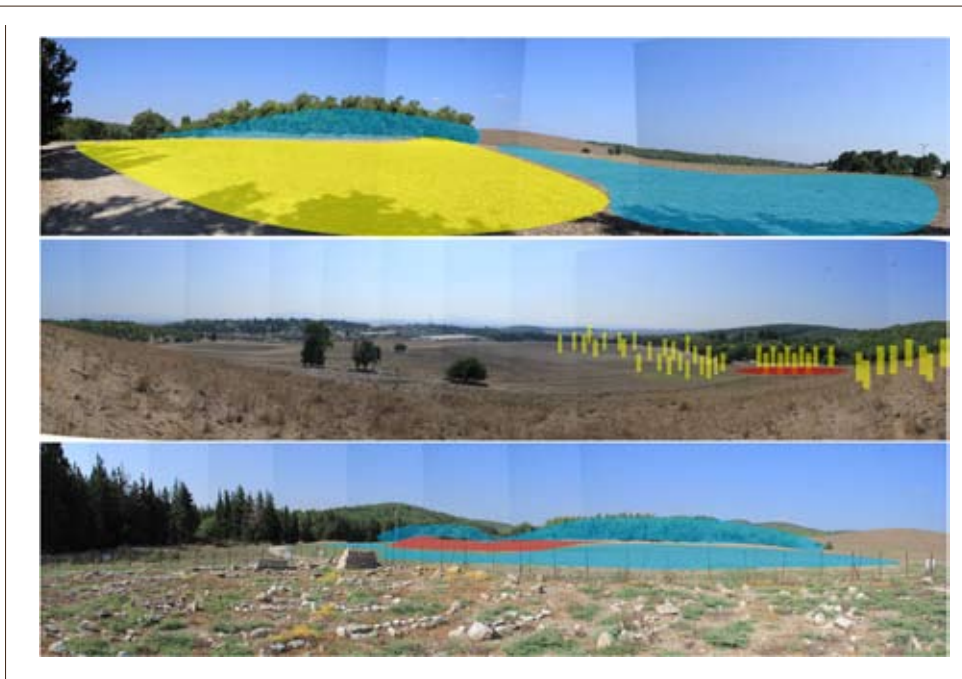
This new part of the village will uphold the memory of past generations, and serve as a support for the Palestinians rebuilding and reshaping the identities that our villages have lost. Details that are so cherished today in the speech and memory of displaced people —the old stones, the fruit garden, the courtyard, etc. — are important tools for meeting the refugees' needs and for showing respect for their memories and feelings.

Through this project we strive to strengthen the belief of our own generation in the plausibility of return. Its realization is neither improbable nor impossible, and we can approach it gradually, step by firm step, as our personal and collective will increases and is translated into organized action. We also wish that the present project will raise awareness and broaden the space of knowledge and learning so that everyone may become familiar with the case of al-Lajjun and its people, and with the Palestinian refugees in general. We want the present project to make an influential step, on top of previous efforts by others, to insist on the Right of Return, and to move from the stage of documentation, history, archives and memory preservation to a stage of practical, concrete implementation.(Figures 14-21).

Figures 14-21
3D visualizations of the village center

Click here for a simulated planning vision of the future Allajjun town center:

http://youtu.be/WYKWz2ywPiw

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