Isolation, separation and quarantine

Editor Jamil Hilal

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Foreword

More Than an Epidemic

Editor

The Coronavirus, or Covid-19, continues to spread worldwide after over eight months since the start of the breakout. Several centres continue to race for a vaccine against this epidemic. The same questions have been repeated since it first appeared and during the subsequent lockdowns and preventive measures, including the declared state of emergency that affected a large part of humankind and during the first wave as well as the second wave, which began in some countries in fall 2020.

The quick global spread of the epidemic and the accompanying restrictions on movement, access and assembly have raised substantive questions about the nature of the existing global economic system and its role in creating the conditions for the virus's quick emergence and outbreak. They have also raised questions about this system's role in the subsequent surge in rates of impoverishment and unemployment, and aggravating the exposure of large groups to the perils of poverty. The pandemic has posed urgent questions about the responsibility of the capitalist neoliberal system for deepening inequalities within communities, including its responsibility for the increased tension in human relations with animal and plant ecosystems and the climate, consequently creating enabling conditions for the emergence and spread of new, dangerous viruses that threaten human life.

The epidemic triggered a broad disposition towards the need for structural change in globalisation as it developed during the past four decades, and in the role and drivers of the international institutions, many of which have become paralyzed, muddled and marginalised. They fail to confront the growing extremist and egotistical nationalistic trends together with the strengthening of values of profit, individualism and the market economy—free from societal control—that dictate the modes of relations among people. This book touches on concerns relevant to the significance and ramifications of the pandemic. It also includes several accounts and thoughts addressing its ramifications on the Palestinian situation amidst the settler-colonial domination over historic Palestine.

The new pandemic waves contributed to renewing anxiety for the future, survival and the types of relations that might prevail within humankind and in the sphere of international relations once the pandemic recedes, in addition to other relevant topics, as this introduction attempts to outline.

Corona: An analysis of the repercussions of the pandemic on the global economy and on culture

Ghassan Khatib's article entitled "The Repercussions of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Global Economy" discusses the economic and social repercussions of Covid-19, indicating that the global economy had been declining immediately before the epidemic. This fact drove governments, whose revenues decreased because of the measures they took against the pandemic, to increase spending on unemployment and assistance schemes—with discrepancies—for those who lost their income, and provide support to businesses facing collapse. Many governments were compelled to increase their spending on healthcare and needs.

Khatib's article attributes the deteriorating global economic indicators prior to Covid-19 to three factors: Tension in Chinese-American economic relations, American fiscal policies and instability in oil prices because of speculations among oil-producing countries. The economic repercussions of the pandemic led to a severe decline in various economic indicators, most notably the economic growth rate, which declined globally, which led international economic and financial institutions to consider that the global economy has entered a state of economic recession. The article includes a table issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in June 2020 that reveals the impact of Covid-19 on different countries and indicates that the international economic and financial institutions unanimously agree that the current economic crisis is deeper than the 2008 global financial crisis and the most serious since the 1929 Great Depression. The article cites the IMF report on the decline in international trade because of the pandemic, which led to a decrease in demand, a collapse of transit tourism and instability of supplies because of lockdowns. The article indicates that the coronavirus crisis has increased financial inflation, budget deficits and public debt. It also addresses the social ramifications of the deteriorating economic indicators, most notably the increase in unemployment. According to the International Labour Organisation, unemployment affected women more severely, aggravating gender inequalities in employment. The increase in unemployment indicates a proportionate increase in poverty (more precisely impoverishment) rates. Furthermore, poor countries are suffering heavier losses than rich countries at the human and economic levels while increasing inequalities at the global level. It also addresses the adverse impact of the crisis on education and the long-term impact on human capital, the most important element in socio-economic development. It concludes that although the crisis shall slow down capitalist globalisation, the process will resume its role once the crisis recedes.

Many have been sceptical towards the measures taken against Covid-19, the subsequent disruption of work and the resulting unemployment. Some expressed concern that the risk of compliance with the adopted measures exceeds that of the virus itself. It has become hard to persuade people of the political, economic and health policies that govern the world. Two things about the Coronavirus pandemic baffled Khaled Hourani in his article entitled "A Life Haunted by Anxiety." The first concerns the state (including corrupt institutions), its reference of conduct and its claim that it cares for the health and wellbeing of its citizens. The second concerns the intellectual becoming obedient in the times of fear, compliant with the safety measures adopted by the state institution or the ruling authority. More importantly, Hourani, as a plastic artist, has noticed the bewilderment of the art world and art institutions in Palestine and worldwide that require a live audience to attend museums, festivals and theatres—just like sport institutions and events.

Hourani noted that the pandemic has been more severe in Palestine because of the absence of a sovereign state that controls the borders, natural resources and internal and external movement, and the lack of institutions that care for creative artists and their needs, which also applies to other groups such as the unemployed. Hourani adds:

At the personal level, when I looked for the artist inside me, I found the maintenance

worker. I was not an artist; I did not feel that art could help me at that moment. . . . In Palestine, the situation that preceded the Coronavirus was not normal, to hope to restore it. Possibly, this pandemic has overshadowed the way we perceive the political and cultural conditions, and the cultural meaning of this conflict in the wake of the global condition. Listening to the news, the notion of common humanity at a moment of danger, contemplating many things, and reconsidering the status of the individual, personally threatened with anxiety and tension.

The epidemic in the times of Corona: aspirations for recovery

In his article entitled "Corona Got Us," Matt Aufderhorst contemplates the potential for the epidemic to change the image of our bodies and consciousness of ourselves and others. He wonders whether our culture, economy, capitalism and the prevalent health systems have the necessary vitality to confront the Coronavirus crisis. The article comprises a series of advice and recommendations—precisely 50—about the best means to address the epidemic. Hence, it is not possible to summarise it. For example, the advice includes, "Precaution is a good idea in times of pestilence; figure out the space ahead of you. Forbearance is an even better one; know the space in which you linger. But, the best advice is circumspection; respect the space, yours and that of others." The next advice follows: "To bury oneself silently in times of pestilence harms not only us, but also our friends. Not to mention family. Reason always breathes through friendly conversation. If you wall yourself in, air and water will inevitably become scarce in the long run. Even if there are still enough resources to go around, at least at the beginning."

We may agree with most of the author's advice, but many may not agree with the concluding advice: "In times of pestilence, only love helps. And if, for whatever reason, it is not in stock, goodness, compassion and indulgence are advisable." It is hard for the Palestinians, besieged inside racist settler-colonial enclaves to perceive with goodness, compassion and indulgence those who oppress, dispossess, displace and prevent them from returning to their homeland!

In their account entitled "DAAR, a Home Between the Public and the Private," Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti explain DAAR (Decolonising Architecture Art Research), a house whose main objective is to search the relationship between the private space (represented by the house) and public space as a site of governance. DAAR has created different collective spaces at the threshold between the public and private. The account notes that the role of the house and its relationship with the public has radically changed during the Coronavirus pandemic, which required rethinking the house's role in society. The account relies on the experience of working at DAAR "at the thresholds between art, architecture and pedagogy." It also extensively uses citations from the book Permanent Temporariness, written by the founders of DAAR, and includes dialogue about the relationship between the private and public space and their shift in function during crises, such as during the first Intifada and what is currently happening in the wake of the Coronavirus crisis. The account points out two successful experiences in transforming the home space to a collective space for social and political action. The first experience was recounted by Hilal at al-Fawwar refugee camp in Palestine, whose efforts were successful in constructing a walled plaza. Soon the plaza became a perfect place for weddings, condolences and gatherings for women. The second case was the experience of a Syrian refugee family in north Sweden, who transformed their small living room to a place to host Swedish state representatives, rejecting the role of the permanent guest by transforming themselves into the host. The two authors of the article concluded that they realised, "During our many years of practice in Palestine, we developed a practice to transform a private space of the house into a collective and shared space. Many people exercise the right to host without realising the power it carries."

On transiting from dystopia to utopia and confronting settler-colonial structures in Palestine

Yara Hawari's account, "From Dystopia to Utopia: Imagining a Radical Future," stems from the fact that the Coronavirus pandemic sheds light on power structures and inequalities within communities. She points out that "The dystopic new reality the world found itself in had many characteristics of daily life that many Palestinians have been suffering from because of nearly a century of ongoing settler-colonial invasion." She suggests staying away from the current dystopia and imagining a radical future for Palestine, explaining that science fiction is not popular in the Palestinian literary world. She cites a collection of short stories, Palestine +100: Stories From a Century After the Nakba, in which Palestinian writers combine science fiction and dystopic worlds to imagine Palestine 100 years after the 1948 ethnic cleansing. The editor of the book concludes that the genre of science fiction is not a drastic costume change for Palestinian writers, especially those based in Palestine. Everyday life, for them, is a kind of dystopia. Hawari asserts that the Nakba is a continuous process manifested daily in the racist settler colonialism that

Palestinians suffer from and the erasure of their history and heritage. Under this Israeli settler-colonial regime, every aspect of Palestinian life is controlled and under surveillance, though it varies from one geographic location to another. She believes that creating a utopia out of past recollections is an effective way to navigate the dystopic present.

Hawari also notes, "Nostalgia often omits the less attractive aspects of the past, it simultaneously highlights those aspects that are missing from the present." Nostalgia may be either temporal or spatial. These are not mutually exclusive, but rather overlapping in the narrative of Palestinians. She concludes that pandemics, including the Coronavirus, have compelled humankind to disconnect with the past and imagine a new world. She believes that Palestine combines many of the world's most oppressive and dystopic structures of power, and Coronavirus provides an opportunity to rethink and imagine the portal from the dystopia to the utopia, wondering whether we, as Palestinians, can step through it.

In her article entitled "Pandemic in Palestine, not an Analogy," Shourideh Molavi discusses with some elaboration the role of NSO, an Israeli cyber-weapons manufacturer whose software is programmed for worldwide governments to illegally hack the communication devices of human rights figures, lawyers, journalists and opposition activists. She points out that the shift towards virtual forms of communication made us more vulnerable to surveillance and monitoring. The Netanyahu government used the Coronavirus crisis to adopt measures that broaden the scope of powers of the Internal Security Agency (Shin Bet) to track the movement of persons with Covid-19, but these measures can also be used to violate privacy and silence human rights defenders. The writer believes that normalising the use of Israeli digital programmes for surveillance and control cannot be separated from Israeli colonialism in Palestine. She points out how the outbreak intensified existing racialised structures and notes that the security approach, which Israel adopted during the epidemic, uses the existing military structure and is based on the dispossession of and discrimination against the Palestinian people. She concludes with the lessons learnt from examining the racialised settler-colonial structures used in Palestine to understand the mobilisation of similar repressive practices and structures elsewhere. She cites the recommendations of a young Gazan to his fellow Palestinians on how to cope with isolation and maintain their morale during siege and lockdown.

Alienation and exploitation of Palestinian workers inside Israel and besieging them in a racist hierarchical structure

In her account entitled "The Epidemic and Colonial and Capitalist Oppression," Amira Silmi sheds light on the gaps and problems in the current global system exposed by the Coronavirus pandemic, particularly excluding unskilled workers, who work in 'vital' and 'essential' industries, from health precautions adopted in several countries, including Palestine. She gives examples of how the state of exception and oppression become more exposed during the pandemic and the extent to which this leads to normalised forms of coercion and exploitation of the workers and the poor rather than reveal the contradictions produced by capitalism. Silmi agrees with Giorgio Agamben, who said that the pandemic has provided the state with the justification to take exceptional measures that lead to ripping people's lives from their political and social dimensions, reducing them to their biological lives. Consequently, the pandemic (or in particular the policies and measures to 'combat' it), may enhance the separation of the human from themselves. She points out that Agamben hopes that something positive may emerge from the pandemic, as it may compel people to wonder if their previous lifestyle was sustainable.

The writer considers the fact that Palestinian society is colonised explains the way that Palestinian workers are treated—with an uncertainty that the epidemic necessitates. She believes that this has been quite evident in their refusal of 'emergency' measures. The Palestinian worker only perceives himself as a worker and the risk that characterises his life, as a worker in Israel, has never constituted a factor that prevented him from going to work. This reveals the conflict between the fake political sovereignty of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its economic dependence and lack of any form of sovereignty over 'security' on the ground. Israel treats Palestinian workers as expatriate workers and imposes on them the attributes of expatriate labour in terms of its low cost and in deprivation of any labour rights that Israeli workers enjoy. At the same time, this labour is cheaper than expatriate or foreign labour, both politically and economically. The Palestinian worker toils inside Israel either daily or weekly and returns to one of the enclaves, which Israel surrounds walls walls and closed with military checkpoints, something it cannot do with expatriate labour.

Silmi's account elaborates on the conditions of Palestinian workers inside Israel, in terms of wages, tenure, work conditions and risks of commuting to and from

the workplace. She links those conditions with colonial and neoliberal conditions, the repercussions of the Oslo Agreement and the conditions of the Coronavirus outbreak. She points out that Israelis treated these workers as spreaders of the virus, who are the "vulnerable or exposed flank" of the Palestinians, and wonders why Israel was not held accountable for adopting such a policy.

In his account entitled, "Not Our State: on the Palestinian Imaginations of Liberation," Hashem Abu Shama'a forms two hypotheses. The first is that there is a fundamental antagonism between Palestinians and the colonial state, and this defines its hierarchical system. Israel perceives Palestinians as dispensable, ill and death-deserving bodies. Abu Shama'a discusses the relation between settler colonialism and Palestinian labour, noting that literature on settler colonialism often considers labour secondary, as it considers settler-colonialist aims to acquire land and eliminate its Indigenous population and therefore seeks to get rid of Palestinian labour. The author wonders why Israel allows Palestinian workers to labour in its enterprises amidst a global pandemic.

The second hypothesis is that the reason for the scarcity of alternative Palestinian imaginations of liberation is the unilateral concentration on the mechanisms of Israeli control and the reduction of Palestinian liberation to a project of building a capitalist national state. He believes that the structural inequalities that the pandemic revealed in Palestine and the world constitute an entry point to construct a new political language. This language stems from the experience of the Black and Indigenous communities in United States and the notions of Patrick Wolfe on the attributes of settler colonialism as a continuous structure based on elimination and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Accordingly, he believes that Israel has sought to reduce its dependence on Palestinian labour at the time that it guaranteed the opposite—Palestinian dependence on its settler colonialism—to ensure its economic and spatial hegemony. He believes that labour has played a "launching role" in building the settler-colonial state and an ongoing central role in conquering and neutralising Palestinian subjects. He considers Palestinian labour inside Israel part of a racist hierarchical structure, noting how the Israeli employers started to drop Palestinian workers with Covid-19 symptoms at the checkpoints while the Israeli health companies and institutions were promoting their high-tech surveillance and control products. From a Zionist settler-colonial perspective, the Palestinian body is a terrorist, ill, a threat and underserving of protection or life. Abu Shama'a argues that we cannot demand that the state established to annihilate and dispossess us recognise our rights: "as such, recognition becomes a technique for blockade, neutralisation and genocide." He believes that "the settler state must be held accountable, with the ultimate goal of its elimination," and that the objective of the Palestinian struggle is "abolishing the settler institutions, hierarchies and modes of existence, in addition to the means in which our political selves are limited and controlled, to establish a new society."

Abu Shama'a considers that the Oslo Agreement "has reduced the Palestinian liberation struggle into a struggle for building a nation-state over part of historic Palestine." The result was further expropriation of land by the colonial state, the establishment of PA institutions, which intensified class and gender divisions within Palestinian society and adopted neoliberal policies. Such policies gave priority to capital over the people, reduced the 'international community' to UN agencies and substituted natural allies of the Palestinian people—movements against colonialism, oppression and racism—with official governments.

On settler colonialism, racialisation, the Indigenous and Black movements, neoliberalism and the suffering of Palestine

The paper entitled "Our Wrecks of the Medusa: A dialogue on Economy, Masculinity and Race Within and Beyond the Pandemic" comprises a dialogue staged in early October in Vancouver between two academics, Phanuel Antwi and Max Haiven. It begins with an introduction to the painting The Raft of the Medusa by Théodore Géricault, which today hangs in the Louvre. It depicts 15 sailors of different nationalities, the only survivors of a shipwreck of which there were originally 150, drifting upon a raft after 13 days of suffering and terror. The painting was chosen as an allegory for our own troubled times, when systems of oppression and exploitation seek to reduce humanity to its very worst. However, humanity resists, according the paper's foreword.

The paper includes a dialogue about phenomena that appeared during the epidemic. These included the masculinity crisis, which intensified after a high rate of men lost their jobs and had to stay at home, unprepared for reproductive labour. Staying home generates a more dangerous form of masculinity and an environment that produces delusions, conspiracy theories and narcissistic paranoia, which constitute means by which men—or some, at least—seek to re-empower themselves as "masters of reality." This is where the danger of masculinity lies. The dialogue extends to address the shift in the young generation's perception of gender and their voluntary action to assist

vulnerable citizens who are more susceptible to contagion. The intervention asserts the importance of sharing vulnerability as well as fortune, identity, subjectivity and inter-reliance. It denounces U.S. president Trump's perspective towards the epidemic (identifying the Coronavirus as the "Chinese Virus") as a global north patriarchal perspective. Several other issues are covered that this foreword is unable to cover.

Under the subheading "Temporalities" is a discussion of the Black Lives Matter movement and its denotations in understanding the current moment in the United States in relation to other movements that struggle against racialisation, oppression, colonialism and exploitation in the world. The section also addresses movements that oppose colonial knowledge and Eurocentric teaching curricula. It refuses to separate colonialism from racialisation in its treatment of Indigenous peoples and the intention to position them in the past, overlooking the heritage of colonial conquests, dispossession, racialisation, land appropriation and racial alienation and exploitation.

Haiven points out how the liberation movements of Indigenous and Black populations understood themselves through solidarity with the Palestinian people and how premature death is both the outcome of police or colonial violence and also the unfair distribution of necessities (clean drinking water, sufficient and adequate food, healthcare, healthy housing and others). Hence, we find large discrepancies in local and global premature mortality rates. The paper concludes with a shrewd and deep reading into the painting's meaning and the movements and appearances of the characters.

In the article entitled "A Preliminary Analysis of the Repercussions of the Coronavirus Pandemic," Hilal proposes a number of observations, most notably his affirmation that the strict measures adopted by most countries to confront the Coronavirus outbreak have led to severe recessions in the rate and forms of consumption. He points out that religious institutions have nothing to give against the epidemic. He also argues that neoliberal policies unleashed unrestricted profits at the expense of the safety and wellbeing of humanity and aggravated their suffering, especially for groups that suffer from deliberate discrimination, impoverishment and deprivation. This not only unveiled inequalities in the world, but also deepened and generated new forms of inequality. Hence, many have called to adopt radical policies different from those adopted during the past four decades, including the call to establish a welfare state and a global system with more solidarity and effectiveness.

Several governments have adopted exceptional measures to confront the Coronavirus epidemic, triggering legitimate concerns regarding the abuse of the current situation to legislate oppressive measures and laws that restrict democratic values and freedoms. Those concerns were aggravated by the use of security services to ensure compliance with emergency measures. Agamben was among those who warned of the 'state of exception' in confiscating political, civil and human rights. The renowned philosopher Noam Chomsky also said that the exceptional measures taken by most governments have led to the deterioration of democracy and the disruption of the global economic order. Concerns over the consequences of this epidemic and the emergence of other epidemics increased amid the continued denial of the relationship between nature, humankind and culture (in its broad sense) and the advantages the capital and its markets enjoy in identifying the forms of such a relationship.

The article highlights the need to reconsider the structure, goals and functions of international agencies, as agencies concerned with serving humankind at large. It points out the risks of exploiting the epidemic to nurture totalitarian, fundamentalist, racist and narrow nationalistic approaches. It also warns of the abuse of digital technology to produce, use and market tracking and surveillance devices against the citizens, violating individual privacy. It goes on to warn that the course of the epidemic in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is subject to Israeli border control in both regions. The young-age composition of Palestinians may reduce the risk of contagion and increase the ability to resist the disease. The enclave or ghetto nature of the walled areas may also affect the progress of the epidemic, which largely applies to Palestinians living in areas occupied by Israel in 1948. The economies of the West Bank and Gaza are also dependent on external transfers and are under full Israeli control. As such, they lack integration. He also points out the vulnerability of the Palestinian workers at Israeli enterprises and the impact of the intensive presence of Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem and Hebron, the least willing to comply with preventive measures against the Coronavirus. He concludes that Palestinians suffering because of the pandemic is intensified because Israel continues its discriminatory, racist, settler-colonial policies, and abuses the state of emergency to strengthen its grip, bolster the neoliberal system and exploit its regional and international status to normalise relations with Arab regimes.

The article expects new forms of mass uprisings because of the aggravating discrepancies in the distribution of wealth, power and knowledge and the increasing

rates of poverty and unemployment. This is compounded by the failure of most regimes to address the ramifications of the epidemic, the possibility of new waves and the confused relation between the public and culture, in which social media fails to bridge the existing gap.

At the Palestinian level, the article argues that the Coronavirus crisis has revealed the need to develop a new national strategy. The possibility of establishing an independent sovereign Palestinian state has vanished; the crisis has exposed, Palestinian-wise, the limited role of the private sector and the receding role of civil society organisations. The new strategy should be formulated following a radical review of the performance of political and civil society in Palestinian communities. He believes that the Palestinian condition is pending on the emergence of new formations that are committed to liberation goals based on democratic principles and values that confront the national compound Palestinian predicament.

A Preliminary Analysis of the Repercussions of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Jamil Hilal

Foreword

The coronavirus pandemic raised several questions about the global economic, political, cultural, social and environmental future. The prevailing opinion among many knowledgeable parties is that after the pandemic, the world will never be the same as the world before it.

Before reviewing the literature that addresses the coronavirus pandemic in general, it is worth recalling that the pandemic spread, was diagnosed and was confronted under the control of a capitalist neoliberal global system, which may be considered a form of capital accumulation that embraces geopolitical conflicts, imbalanced growth and interventions by the international financial institutions and the states themselves. It is a world that undergoes technological transformations of strategic dimensions as well as significant transformations in the division of labour and the modes of social relations. It also witnesses an increasingly stressful relationship with the primary nature (such as climate change) and with the secondary nature, represented by the environment which humans built and continue to build, particularly through urbanisation. It also witnesses stress in the social, cultural, scientific and religious formations that humans produce in time and place. Hence, extreme caveat to separate between nature, the culture and the economy, and assert the metabolic relation between those elements[1].

The neoliberal globalisation is not restricted to the mechanisms of profit-motivated capital accumulation, especially quick profits, but focusses on the mechanisms that make profits through the predominance of forms of immediate and quick consumption of the goods and services of this globalised capitalist system. This is manifested in the enormous fictitious capital growth and the accumulation of public debt. Such an approach reminds of the protest movements that flared up all over the world, mostly expressing their rejection of the manifestations of neoliberalism and its impact on the life conditions of the majority of humanity. It is estimated that 70-80% of the current capitalist economy is mobilised by quick consumption. It is also worth noting that producing and spreading viruses that threaten human lives depends significantly on human action in terms of creating the environmental conditions that transform those viruses to lethal viruses. Such conditions include high population density, enabling modes of virus transportation from birds and animals to humans and modes of swift geographic transportation of the viruses.[2]

Because of capitalist globalisation, the health, economic, social and cultural risks of coronavirus pandemic require, relatively speaking, a long time to contain, because of the dense and wide global distribution networks. Needless to say, the pandemic has imposed strict restrictions on movement and travel, and on the hospitality and tourism sectors (hotels, restaurants, cafes, parks, cinemas, museums, modes of transportation), festivals, conferences and sports contests. This has caused severe recession in the rates and forms of consumption worldwide and provided an opportunity to show that political religious movements have nothing to give against the coronavirus pandemic. It also exposed what neoliberal capitalism has done to the public service sector (including the health sector), as it unleashed the race for profit at the expense of the people's safety and welfare.

A. The view of the liberal intellectual elites towards the implications of globalising the pandemic

The U.S. magazine *Foreign Policy* was among the first publications to conduct an opinion poll (dated 20 March 2020) of a group of "world intellectuals," according to the magazine, about the future of the world after the Covid-19 pandemic. It had conducted the poll before the major outbreaks in the U.S and Europe. The main opinions that appeared in the poll were:[3]

First: The birth of a less open and free world and a transformation in the centre of world power

The Harvard University professor of International Relations[4] considered that confronting the coronavirus pandemic would strengthen the control of international institutions as well as strict nationalist approaches, attributing the emergencies declared by various governments and regimes and expanding government control, which they would not willingly give up. He said that the West would lose its global power, which would shift to East Asia (China, South Korea and Singapore), because of their tangible ability to control the pandemic, unlike Europe and the United States. He did not think that the global centres of power would conclude the need to build a global solidarity system. They did not reach such a conclusion from previous pandemics. He believes that the post-coronavirus world will be "less open, less prosperous and less free" because of incompetent leadership, adding that the outbreak of Covid-19 proved that the United States would not be able to protect its security on its own.

The president of the Brookings Institution[5] considered that the Covid-19 pandemic would change power relations in the world, though not clearly, because it increased the tension among states—particularly between China and United States—and because the pandemic would likely reduce the productive capacity of the global economy. It would have a grave impact on developing countries and countries that have a high rate of workers without economic and social protections.

The deputy director general of the International Institute for Strategic Studies[6] considered that the United States lost its position as the first leader of the world because of the narrow and self-centred behaviour of its political leadership and its incompetence. He believes that it was possible to alleviate the global impact of the pandemic if the international agencies provided early information and gave governments sufficient time to prepare and allocate the necessary resources. He criticised the United States for not taking a leading position in organising the fight against the pandemic. On the other hand, the professor at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and former undersecretary for political affairs in the U.S. State Department[7] said that the outbreak constituted the worst crisis of the this century, whose impact may lead to the growth of human solidarity. He pointed out aspects of human solidarity manifested in most countries of the world.

Second: expectations of change in economic globalisation

The director of the London-based Chatham House Institute[8] believes that the coronavirus may deal a hard blow to economic globalisation, noting that the United States has started to move away from globalisation in its pursuit to restrain the growing economic and military strength of China and block its ability to acquire American technology. He believes that the coronavirus pandemic will push corporations and governments to adopt measures that would enable them to endure a relatively long period of economic isolation, which may push some to adopt a new form of globalisation without identifying its characteristics. On the other hand, the researcher at the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute[9] does not believe that the pandemic will change the main features of economic globalisation. It will only increase the global economic clout of China, something that began following the shift in American priorities in foreign trade, while China maintained an important position for trade in its foreign relations. The researcher believes the priority of the current U.S. leadership is to maintain its world supremacy—hence, compete with China—and not to assure the welfare of the American people, which has declined during the past few years. To prove his point, he refers to the name the U.S. president gave the pandemic, the "Chinese pandemic," and to his attack against the World Health Organisation, which he accused of failure and of being on the side of China.

The researcher for Latin America studies at the Council on Foreign Relations[10] expected that the Covid-19 pandemic would have a negative impact on the global manufacturing sector since companies would reduce their multistep and multinational supply chains. She further explained that supply chains were recently under suspicion because of the increasing cost of Chinese labour, because of the U.S. president's war against China and as a consequence of the progress in the use of robots, automation and 3D printing. She believes that the coronavirus pandemic has adversely affected supply chains because many companies stopped production, thus depriving other companies of supplies. Hence, she expects that after the pandemic recedes, those companies shall seek to secure the sources of their supplies, and governments shall intervene to compel strategic industries in their own countries to develop local contingency plans to support local economic stability.

An expert in global health[11] considered that the main shock the global financial and economic system faced because of the coronavirus pandemic laid in the vulnerable global supply chains and distribution networks, which would lead to a radical change in the global economic system. She believes that Covid-19 has proven that "pandemics not only infect people, but may also infect the whole programmed production system." Consequently, she expects losses resulting from the pandemic to afflict the financial markets, which constitute a radical new phase in the world capitalist system, in which the supply chains are restricted to states with higher dependence on reserves to protect from future fluctuations.

Third: Concerns with tightening grips of governments over their societies

A Brookings India fellow and former national security advisor in India[12] expected relative success for governments to contain the pandemic, coupled with tightening governmental control over the citizens. He noted that the states that responded successfully at an early stage to the pandemic, such as South Korea and Taiwan, are democracies, and the states that were late are democracies too. He believes that despite the need to develop human solidarity, as the pandemic revealed, the different political systems move towards closure in the name of independence and control of national self-determination. He expects the emergence of "a poorer and degenerating world" with the possibility that the pandemic may cause a strong shock that leads to a realisation of the importance of multilateral cooperation on major global issues.

A professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University[13] expected that the harsh socioeconomic repercussions of the pandemic would boost extremist nationalism and competition among the superpowers. He concluded that in the long-term, the United States and European countries could neither avoid the need to build a system of social protection and care nor avoid regulating forms of interdependence among the states.

In a similar context, a professor at Harvard University[14] considered that the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the failure of the national security strategy of U.S. president Trump, which focused on competing with the superpowers, and expected that even if the United States remains a superpower, the coronavirus experience proved that it is incapable to protect its security unilaterally. The president of the Council on Foreign Relations expected the coronavirus crisis to lead the state towards further isolation. He expected the states to take steps towards expanding "the selective self-support" due to the poor supply chains, escalate opposition to wide-scale immigration, decrease their commitment to resolving regional and international problems (including climate change), direct resources towards internal reconstruction and address the economic impacts of the crisis. He expected an

increase in the number of weak and failed states and the crisis to contribute to the continued deterioration in Chinese-American relations, and to weaken European integration. He believes that the desire to address the globalisation crisis, which the coronavirus crisis unveiled, shall weaken.[15]

Most scholars and researchers involved in the poll did not focus on the measures taken to confront unemployment and poverty resulting from the pandemic, and the subsequent instability and uprisings that may spread all over the world, wider than before. They did not note that in most countries, the public and private health sectors were deficient in confronting the pandemic.[16]

B. Critical analyses of the crisis in confronting the pandemic

Several diverse and radical analyses exist of the implications of the coronavirus pandemic and means of confronting it. Some are close to the world decisionmakers while others adopt a critical stand of the global capitalist system and its dynamics. The common denominator among those analyses is the realisation of the need to effect radical change in the state's relation with the economy and society. Here are some important analyses.

First: the failure of capitalist neoliberal globalisation

The *Financial Times* editorial on 3 April 2020 considered that the coronavirus not only exposed the reality of inequality in society, but also contributed to generating new manifestations of it. The newspaper called on the world's first political leaders to pinpoint takeaways from the crisis, as they did during the Great Depression in the West and the enormous sacrifices inflicted on citizens, and during World War II, when they pushed for developing a new social contract.[17]

The *Financial Times* editorial noted that plans to control the pandemic exposed the failures of the employed health systems in most countries of the world, exposed the deficiencies in their economies and their failure to prevent soaring unemployment rates. It warned of the heavy price that the most vulnerable groups of society paid, losing their jobs and livelihoods, while some could work remotely. The editorial pointed out that low-income groups who kept working faced either infection or unemployment if they decided to stay home. It considered that allocating huge budgets to support the economy might lead to worse conditions, since they do not support workers, and providing additional credit from the central banks may help large businesses and capital owners, but not needy groups. It is worth noting that the elderly and persons with chronic diseases are the first victims of the pandemic, while the largest affected group is the youth and those at working age, who either had their education interrupted or lost job opportunities.

The editorial concludes that the coronavirus crisis has shed light on the need to adopt radical policies, unlike those adopted throughout the past four decades. Furthermore, governments should undertake a larger role in the economy, invest in public services, provide labour tenure, place wealth redistribution on their agendas—including securing basic income for citizens—and add wealth taxes. The editorial calls for restoring the welfare state without actually naming it.

Second: Political democracy does not protect from the pandemic breakout

The coronavirus crisis revealed that political democracy provides security against the pandemic outbreak. The pandemic spread in Europe (Italy, France, Spain, Britain and Germany), the United States and other liberal democracies such as India. Most of those countries stood helpless or confused with the pandemic outbreak, while authoritarian regimes were not safe from it. Hence, the nature of the political system does not constitute a decisive factor in preventing or confronting the outbreak.

Several factors influenced pandemic control[18]—most notably: A leadership capable of early detection of infection and quick response to protect its citizens (such as closing borders, suspending flights and providing the necessary tests and treatments); the preparedness of the health system for a quick response to emergencies; and the availability of a health system that provides free healthcare to all citizens irrespective of class, religion, race, gender and age. The availability of those factors, coupled with democratic institutions that protect freedoms and rights, explain the discrepancies in the rates of success among states to control and treat the disease outbreak.

Third: Concern with regulating "the state of exception"

Several governments easily adopted exceptional measures to confront the coronavirus pandemic, which comprised constraining aspects of their citizens' lives, including restrictions on movement and closing down important activities in the public sphere (such as the right to assembly, protests and strikes).

This generated legitimate concerns over abusing the new conditions to legislate coercive measures and laws that oppress democratic values and freedoms. Many governments used their security services and armies to ensure compliance with the emergency measures.[19] The celebrated Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben[20]

expressed his concern over abusing the "state of exception" to confiscate political, civil and human rights.

The renowned philosopher Noam Chomsky also considered that the exceptional measures adopted by most governments led to the deterioration of democracy and the disruption of the global economic system. Some state leaders spoke about medical doctors as the soldiers standing at the forefront against the Covid-19 virus, a discourse that is in line with imposing "the state of exception" that exposes the failure of neoliberalism. American and European leaders behaved in accordance with neoliberal economic calculations of economic and financial losses resulting from the lockdown and quarantine. Chomsky believes that the political systems governed by neoliberalism constitute a betrayal of the public and that we need to go back to policies that care for human needs. He calls for the use of information technology to create a wide-scale social movement to build a better world.[21]

Fourth: Deepening inequality in society and creating an ethical crisis

The coronavirus crisis deepened the problem of inequality, not because the pandemic discriminates among people, but because discrimination already exits based on social class, ethnicity, race, sect and gender. Moreover, the crisis shed light on the rights to life and to medical care and treatment. In several countries, the outbreak strained intensive care units and forced their staff to face a hard ethical dilemma. Large numbers require immediate care, which requires a decision that violates the strict principle of equality in treating patients, irrespective of social status, age group, ethnic origin, religious affiliation or gender. It places the medical doctor in a position to decide who gets the priority in receiving treatment, i.e., the doctor decides who has the right to life and who is deprived of that right.[22] Nevertheless, the issue must be perceived from the perspective of the spread of the infection and the coronavirus victims according to social status, ethnicity, gender and age group. The data revealed a clear discrepancy in the rates of infection and mortality according to those groups.[23] Elderly homes and centres for persons with special needs have registered high rates of infection and mortality because of medical negligence. This does not mean to overlook inquiries about the discrepancy in coronavirus outbreaks in geographic areas, in a disproportionate manner with poverty or unemployment, as is the case in north, middle and south Italy, or between Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Some indicated that adopting the strategy of physical distancing and staying home to stop the pandemic spread contributed to deepening inequality,[24] since this strategy particularly affected poor youth and the most vulnerable social groups for several reasons, most notably:

First: The difficulty in obtaining money because of the lack of savings, especially for daily workers, freelancers and owners of small enterprises. For those groups, stopping work means hardship in providing basic household needs without the necessary state support.

Second: The difficulty to get a job for a relatively large group of people who neither work in health professions, nor can work from home, or who work in professions the state does not consider strategic.

Third: The lack of resources and opportunities for continuing education, especially for groups who have no access to the internet or the necessary equipment and skills for remote education.

Fourth: The strategy of physical distancing and house quarantines may have mental and physical impacts, particularly in the absence of opportunities for movement.

Fifth: The type of social customs generated by the prolonged practice of physical distancing may constitute a source of concern.

Furthermore, there are ramifications of economic depression on the conditions and the sizes of poor groups.[25] Hence, it is only natural for some to expect different forms of popular uprisings resulting from aggravated unemployment and poverty, and the inability of several states to address the pandemic's ramifications and the probability of new waves.[26]

Fifth: Anticipating a bigger role for digital technology

The policy of staying home and physical distancing highlighted the importance of expanding the opportunities of working from home and remote communications (especially in education and interaction with others), which led to anticipating a bigger role for digital technology in fear of similar pandemic outbreaks in the future.

Consequently, during the period that followed the coronavirus crisis, several studies and researches predicted an increased role for technology in people's lives.[27] This has several dimensions: on the one hand, social media played an important role in covering important aspects of the vacuum resulting from the policy of staying home and physical distancing. On the other hand, social discrepancies widened, since only some people managed to work from home using digital technology. Some states also

used this technology to track corona cases, monitor the movement of people outside their houses and impose the state of exception.

C. The Consequences of Coronavirus on Palestine

The impact of coronavirus on the Palestinian condition may be perceived from different health, economic and political angles. Naturally, other angles are worth attention, such as its impact on social relations and the cultural sector, both of which need thorough and extensive discussion.

The pandemic spread in the West Bank, whereas Gaza was confined due to several reasons, including Israeli control of their borders. The pandemic spread in the West Bank through foreign visitors to Bethlehem, and then through Palestinian workers in Israel and its settlements. Hence, the Palestinian Authority (PA) called for the cancellation of all reservations of foreign visitors in hotels, demanded that workers who intended to work inside the Green Line and settlements stay there for at least one month and imposed precautionary measures on residents. Consequently, the highest rate of Palestinian cases were among Palestinians in East Jerusalem[28] and 1948 land. The second reason is the high rate of children and youth among Palestinians compared to Europe, the United States and Israel, who are less vulnerable to infection and more capable of resisting disease. This may explain—but not fully—the relatively high mortality rate among Palestinian expatriates compared to other Palestinians.[29]

The third reason for the low infection rate in the West Bank and Gaza (and Palestinian holders of Israeli citizenship) is that Israel, the colonial occupying power, besieges Palestinians in these areas. They are confined in 'ghettos' in Gaza, in 'Bantustans' in the West Bank or in geographical enclaves, like the Palestinians inside Israel.

The fourth reason is the measures the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza enacted to contain the virus, which included strict restrictions on movement and gatherings, physical distancing and shutting down schools, universities and other public places. The fact that the Palestinian economy in both regions largely depends on remittances and external transfers and lacks geographic and economic integration might have made such decisions easier for both governments. The middle class met those measures with general approval, as they did not lose their incomes because a high rate depended on PA institutions, were able to work from home, or worked in an environment that managed physical distancing such as banks, telecommunications, and non-governmental organisations.

The above factors did not preclude the decline of Palestinian economic activity in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and 1948 occupied land because of measures taken to confront the pandemic. Research suggests that the West Bank GDP will fall by 21% (at current prices) in 2020 if life is gradually restored during the first three months of the emergency announcement, and by 35% if the restrictive measures of economic activity are extended for an additional 1 ½ months.[30] Some social groups were significantly affected, including groups that work at less than the minimum wage, mostly in the informal sector with no contracts and secured rights. Those also include groups who lost their jobs because their places of employment closed in fear of the pandemic. They also include workers inside Israel and its settlements, amounting to 133,000 workers towards the end of 2019, of whom a large percentage lost work either because the enterprises shut down, the crossings closed or because of fear of the pandemic. Towards early May 2020, only around 25,000 workers from the West Bank worked in Israeli establishments, who had to stay inside the Green Line. With no jobs, their households would be in dire need of assistance.[31]

In East Jerusalem, the coronavirus outbreak was more severe compared to the population than in other Palestinian areas for two reasons: the first is the high population density of Orthodox Jews in the city, who are the least compliant with rules of protection from the pandemic; the second is that a high rate of Palestinians there belong to poor groups compared to Israelis and live in close neighbourhoods to Orthodox Jews. Since the Old City depends on tourism and local shopping from 1948 and West Bank Palestinians, it is expected that the Palestinians in Jerusalem shall suffer from very high unemployment rates because of the restrictive measures to alleviate the pandemic outbreak, in addition to the Israeli discriminatory policies against them.[32]

In the Gaza Strip, the coronavirus outbreak had a lower infection rate than in the West Bank compared to the size of population, despite the high population density there and the high rates of poverty and unemployment, all of which constitute enabling outbreak factors. The siege and closure imposed on Gaza since 2006 is the main cause of the low infection rate. Moreover, Gaza workers have stopped working in Israel since Hamas took over, and the Hamas government took measures to

limit the spread of the virus. Since early March 2020, the government of Gaza took preventive measures, closed educational institutions, stopped prayers at mosques and closed economic facilities operating in tourism, hotels and restaurants until mid-May 2020.

International reports indicate that the period following the coronavirus pandemic[33] and the accompanying declaration of a state of emergency witnessed a worsening of the living conditions in Gaza. Between 15,000 and 20,000 Palestinian workers lost their jobs because of the closure policy adopted to limit the pandemic outbreak. Gaza suffers from high unemployment—at least 43%—with over half the population (53%) living below the poverty line.[34] It also suffers from a severe shortage of medical services and supplies because of the blockade.

A poll conducted by Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics at the end of April 2020, which included a representative sample of the Israeli public, indicated that the economic situation of about 46% of the respondents has worsened in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, and this rate reaches around 57% among Palestinians in Israel.[35] This is in line with the data showing that the impact of measures against the pandemic are most severe on the status and conditions of vulnerable groups.[36]

Several factors may explain the low rate of cases among Palestinians in 1948 occupied land compared to Israeli Jews. The high rate among Jews was the result of the Purim celebrations, Jews travelling from abroad and the lack of compliance among the religious Jews (Haridim) with preventive measures and quarantines. Palestinians do not celebrate Purim and less of them travel abroad. Some suggested, but with no verified scientific evidence, that the Arab Palestinian diet is different from that of Jews, with herbs being part of their daily intake, which contributes to improving their immunity.[37] However, the most credible explanation is that Palestinian towns inside Israel and neighbourhoods inside cities are isolated from Israeli cities and colonies. Connected to this issue is the initiative to form a regional Arab emergency unit, which operates with the Committee of the Heads of Arab Localities and the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab citizens of Israel, which boosted the preparedness of the Palestinian towns there. It is worth noting that Palestinians inside Israel—like Palestinians with Jordanian nationality, for example—have a higher rate of children and youth, who are less susceptible to infection.

The coronavirus pandemic will not change the reality of racist settler colonialism

During the weeks following the pandemic outbreak, arbitrary Israeli arrests, house demolitions and settler attacks against the Palestinian civilians escalated.[38] An Israeli academic noted that the Israeli government used the state of emergency designed to confront coronavirus to tighten its control and bolster the existing neoliberal system. It also used the emergency to market the formation of an emergency government that grants the prime minister, accused of corruption, the first term. It also expedited legislating Israel officially as an apartheid state.[39]

The ongoing discussion among Palestinian political elites on confronting annexation plans tends to propose general ideas that lack mechanisms and measures of implementation, because such mechanisms lie in the hands of centres of power who do not believe that transforming them into tools for implementation serves their interests. General propositions, even when correct, such as reconstructing PLO institutions, reconsidering the form and functions of the PA, stopping the security coordination, setting up a national team to develop a comprehensive national revival plan and others are not enough unless coupled with implementation mechanisms to realise them. Hence, the Palestinian condition remains pending the emergence of new formations that shoulder the liberation goals, based on democratic principles and values to confront the Palestinian political deadlock.

On the Palestinian level, the Palestinian political movement continued to be fragmented and the national institutions (PLO Executive Committee, Central Council and the National and Legislative councils) continued to be absent. The decisions of those institutions are no longer taken seriously after it became clear that decision-making lies in the hands of a few who centralised all powers.[40]

The Palestinian national movement led by PLO institutions has disintegrated into local formations according to geopolitical lines that absented the overarching Palestinian interests and rights. Neither PLO nor PA enjoy the trust of the majority of the Palestinian public. No one counts anymore on implementing the Executive Committee decision of 7 May 2020, which stipulates, "in case the Government of Israel declares annexing any part of the Palestinian Territories . . . then all the agreements and understandings reached between PLO, the Government of Israel and the U.S. Administration will become null and void." Nevertheless, forms of security coordination between the PA apparatus and those of the colonising state continued after the Israeli army issued an order on 9/2/2020 to close the prisoners' accounts[41] at the banks operating in the West Bank. Until the date of writing this article (early June 2020), no practical measures were put in place following the

announcement of PA president on 19 May 2020 that "the PLO and the State of Palestine have become absolved of all the agreements and understandings with the U.S. and Israeli governments" and whether that would include all forms of security coordination. The Palestinian public did not react to this declaration with welcoming and supporting demonstrations.

Annexing new areas of the West Bank and/or subjecting them to Israeli sovereignty has become expected (although without a defined date for its implementation) after forming the Israeli emergency government in mid-May 2020 and receiving the green light from President Trump's administration.[42] Within the same colonial context, the Israeli judiciary issued an order to seize 450 million Israeli shekels from PA tax returns.[43] This decision came from holding the PA responsible for operations targeting Israelis, which aggravates the difficulties the PA faces, amid UN concerns that the repercussions of the coronavirus threatens the PA's "survival and continuity."[44]

It is worth noting that some Israeli newspapers warned of the consequences of Israeli annexation of areas in the West Bank, considering that will place senior officials and Israeli citizens only a step away from the real threat of referral to the International Criminal Court. They concluded that the Israeli Government and Knesset must scrutinise "thoroughly all the ramifications of this reckless step."[45] Some Israelis oppose the annexation process to preserve the "purity" of the Jewish state.[46]

Palestinian analysts consider that the PA president's Decisions by Law, issued during the coronavirus crisis, exceeds the state of necessity. This applies on the Decision by Law No. (5) for the Year 2020 on the Presidency Bureau,[47] which is no less important than the other two revoked preceding decisions.[48] They considered that Decision by Law No. (5) contravenes with the Palestinian Basic Law, grants the Presidency Bureau and its chair wide executive and legal powers that annul the principle of separation of powers, undermines the independence of the Judicial and Legislative authorities and removes several authorities from the prime minister's cabinet.

D. Conclusion

The coronavirus may return, and other lethal pandemics may break out, so long as the relation of humans with nature and animals is not based on the intricate interconnections between nature, human beings and culture in the holistic sense, and as long as capital and its markets dominate the process of identifying the relation with nature, community and culture, and as long as relations among humans are based on perpetuating manifestations of inequality and domination.

The crisis has exposed deep gaps of wealth, power and knowledge that exist among people. The crisis has also unveiled the anti-human face of neoliberal capitalism. There can be no future for the people unless the values of justice and comprehensive social solidarity prevail and unless there is health care for all without exceptions. The pandemic also revealed the need to reconsider the structure, goals and functions of the international agencies, as institutions concerned with serving all the people. It shed light on the importance of aligning citizenship with rights and a new social charter that defines the relationship between the state and the citizen. It warned of the risks of exploiting the pandemic to promote authoritarianism, fundamentalism and racism.[49] It also warned of promoting narrow-minded nationalist trends,[50] imposing the "state of exception" as an easy way out, both on societies and on human rights, and abusing digital technology to produce, use and market appliances that monitor the citizens and violate their privacy. This may explain why, following the pandemic, the philosopher Slavoj Žižek stressed the need for an international institution that regulates the international economy and transforms it from the capitalist market economy into some form of communism, even if implicit.[51]

It is expected that the coronavirus crisis shall affect the form and content of social relations, in terms of the growth of digital transactions, which shall affect the marginalised, poor, displaced and refugee groups. It is also worth scrutinising the emergency measures that severely reduced the public cultural spaces and closed all forms of cultural facilities, moving cultural activities to digital spaces on a temporary basis but may become permanent, and all the subsequent transformations in the relationship between culture and the public.

At the Palestinian level, the coronavirus crisis exposed the absence of Palestinian sovereignty and the need to develop a new Palestinian vision and strategy. Israel destroyed the possibility of establishing an independent and viable Palestinian state, the colonising state poised to take new annexation steps in the West Bank, and the Palestinian private capital has shown its clear limitations, adding to the deficiency of the civil society organisations with few exceptions.[52]

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The Repercussions of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Global Economy

Ghassan Khatib[1]

Introduction

The spread of the highly contagious Covid-19 virus began in Wuhan, China, around 31 December 2019[2] and stayed confined to China for around three months, leading to 84,165 cases and 4,634 deaths[3]. It then gradually spread to different countries, transforming from an epidemic to a pandemic. As of 1 September 2020, 25,500,870 persons have been infected with around 850,879 deaths[4].

Because this virus is highly contagious with currently no vaccine, health experts and institutions in most countries agreed that prevention was the optimal means to avoid the spread of the disease until it can be contained. They recommended extensive and prolonged lockdowns, limiting the movement and mixing of people and stopping work in most sectors, resulting in a halt of production, reduced investments and increased unemployment.

These measures lasted for a relatively long time (the first major lockdown included most parts of the world and lasted around 40 days), resulting in severe economic pressure with increasing numbers losing their sources of livelihood and purchasing powers. It also put pressure on state treasuries, which had to address the burden of providing citizens with the necessary liquidity and emergency health spending alongside a decrease in tax revenue due to the economic slowdown.

The economic crisis had extremely serious repercussions. Unprecedented since the 1929 Great Depression, the crisis led to a sharp rise in poverty rates. Pressure on educational budgets and shutdown of educational institutions caused a significant decrease in educational services and academic achievement in the world. Moreover, the discrepancies in impact between different social groups and countries produced growing socio-economic gaps between countries and individuals within each country.

On the other hand, addressing the pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis required a larger role from the state due to the decline in movement and flow of goods and raw materials among countries and the slowdown in global value chains. This triggered a debate among experts about the future of economic globalisation, which has been dealt a blow that caused its activity to reach unprecedentedly low levels.

The pandemic's impact on globalisation was also aggravated by the set of anti-globalisation policies adopted by the U.S. administration after 2016 and the presidential election of Donald Trump.

The Covid-19 crisis is fairly recent, no more than nine months old, with little reference and academic research addressing its effects. Hence, this paper shall analyse the preliminary reports and statistical data of a number of specialised international economic institutions.

Background

Before analysing the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, two points are worth mentioning for context. The first is the immense gravity of the pandemic for the global economy, and the second is that the global economy had been declining immediately before the pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis.

The economic cost of the pandemic resulted from several factors. First, states had to increase their spending significantly to purchase medical equipment and supplies for examinations and treatment, to build additional medical centres and hospitals, to increase the medical and health services staff and other emergency requirements with additional costs.

Moreover, the lockdowns aimed at stopping the outbreak left large numbers of workers and businesses with no income. In some cases, this pushed governments to introduce massive increases in unemployment and humanitarian assistance spending for those who lost their income and provided aid and loans to enterprises facing the threat of collapse so that they would survive and continue to pay wages to their employees. Furthermore, public revenues decreased, first because of the slowdown in production and trade and the decrease in tax collection, and second because business in most sectors declined, which compelled some governments to provide incentives, credit facilities and tax holidays as a form of indirect governmental support, which in turn led to a decline in revenues.

Regarding the second point, that the crisis came after a decline in the global economy: this decline overlapped and aggravated the subsequent crisis and led to the abovementioned unprecedented recession. The global growth rate had peaked at around 4% in 2017, decreased to 3.6% in 2018 and 3.3% in 2019. The Covid-19 shock came amid a recession in the global economy[5], resulting from two main and some other smaller events.

Primarily, after 2016, the U.S. administration adopted a new set of economic policies. Early in President Trump's term there were extremely tense economic relations with China as well as an escalation in protectionism, enhanced by the U.S. withdrawal from several international conventions. The escalation between the United States and China on several fronts and the increase in protectionism led to uncertainty in trade policies, which adversely affected investment decisions and led to their decline.

A study of the Arab Monetary Fund indicated that "the current tension between U.S.A. and China is among the most important transformations in the global trade regime, as it soon instilled a state of uncertainty in the global economy, adversely affected the business environment and confidence in financial markets, and threatened the expected recovery of the global economy in 2019, given the size of the American and Chinese economies in international trade, comprising around 46% of overall international trade"[6].

In addition, the specific economic policies adopted by the new American administration to revive the American economy, such as cutting taxes and increasing spending to increase demand, led the Federal Reserve, the U.S. central bank, to raise interest rates on deposits and to a lesser extent raise the returns on long-term U.S. treasury bonds.

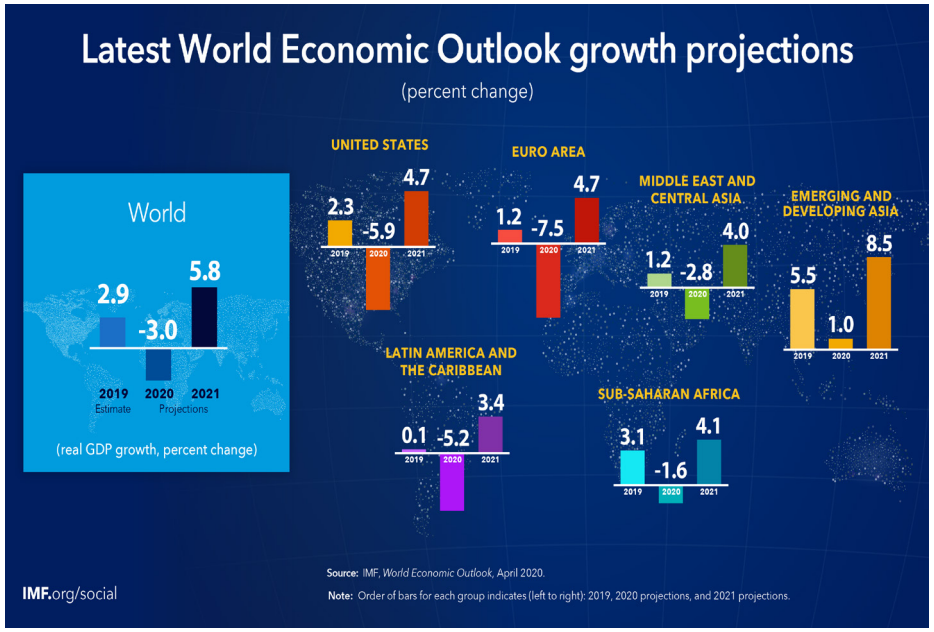
In June 2017, "the Federal Reserve increased the prime interest rate by 0.25%, the

second raise in the current year, and the highest since 2008 Global Financial Crisis," Janet Yellen, the Chair of the Federal Reserve, explained. The decision "reflected the progress achieved by the economy and the expected growth as well"[7].

Since investors felt the increased risk because of the tension in international economic relations, they preferred the safety of U.S. treasury bonds with better returns. Hence, demand for treasury bonds increased, leading to increasing growth rates in the American economy and higher interest rates, which led the value of the U.S. dollar to increase against most currencies in 2018. The increase in the value of the dollar increased stress on the economies of emerging and fragile markets, with variation, which ultimately led to a slowdown in the global economy[8].

In addition to these two main causes for the decline in the indicators of the global economy, namely tension in the Chinese-American economic relations and the American fiscal policies, there were other less significant reasons, such as the volatility of oil prices that led to speculation among oil-producing and -exporting countries. Needless to say, unstable oil prices with a downward trend generate additional uncertainty that discourages investment and leads to declining growth.

The economic repercussions of the pandemic



The economic pressures of the pandemic led to a sharp decline in a variety of economic indicators, most notably the growth rate, which declined globally. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) report issued in June 2020 indicated that "Global growth is projected at –4.9 percent in 2020, 1.9 percentage points below the April 2020 World Economic Outlook (WEO) forecast. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a more negative impact on activity in the first half of 2020 than anticipated, and the recovery is projected to be more gradual than previously forecast. In 2021 global growth is projected at 5.4 percent. Overall, this would leave 2021 GDP some 6½ percentage points lower than in the pre-Covid-19 projections of January 2020"[9]. Accordingly, the international economic and financial institutions consider that the global economy has entered an economic recession[10].

The following chart released by the IMF in June 2020[11] reflects a decline in global growth generally, and discrepancy in growth among different regions.

The economic ramifications have had varying effects on states. Several factors determine the scale of the impact on different countries. Those include health standards, such as the extent of the pandemic outbreak and the ability of health services to cope, in addition to economic factors, such as the country's dependence on foreign aid, foreign trade and tourism, which were hit heavier than other sectors.

The following table, issued by the IMF in June 2020, indicates the impact on each state separately:

Latest World Economic Outlook Growth Projections

(real GDP, annual percent change)	2019	PROJECTIONS 2020	2021
World Output	**2.9**	**-4.9**	**5.4**
Advanced Economies	**1.7**	**-8.0**	**4.8**
United States	2.3	-8.0	4.5
Euro Area	1.3	-10.2	6.0
Germany	0.6	-7.8	5.4
France	1.5	-12.5	7.3
Italy	0.3	-12.8	6.3
Spain	2.0	-12.8	6.3
Japan	0.7	-5.8	2.4
United Kingdom	1.4	-10.2	6.3
Canada	1.7	-8.4	4.9
Other Advanced Economies	1.7	-4.8	4.2
Emerging Markets and Developing Economies	**3.7**	**-3.0**	**5.9**
Emerging and Developing Asia	5.5	-0.8	7.4
China	6.1	1.0	8.2
India	4.2	-4.5	6.0
ASEAN-5	4.9	-2.0	6.2
Emerging and Developing Europe	2.1	-5.8	4.3
Russia	1.3	-6.6	4.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.1	-9.4	3.7
Brazil	1.1	-9.1	3.6
Mexico	-0.3	-10.5	3.3
Middle East and Central Asia	1.0	-4.7	3.3
Saudi Arabia	0.3	-6.8	3.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	3.1	-3.2	3.4
Nigeria	2.2	-5.4	2.6
South Africa	0.2	-8.0	3.5
Low-Income Developing Countries	5.2	-1.0	5.2

Source: IMF, *World Economic Outlook Update*, June 2020

Note: For India, data and forecasts are presented on a fiscal year basis, with FY2020/2021 starting in April 2020. India's growth is -4.9 percent in 2020 based on the calendar year.

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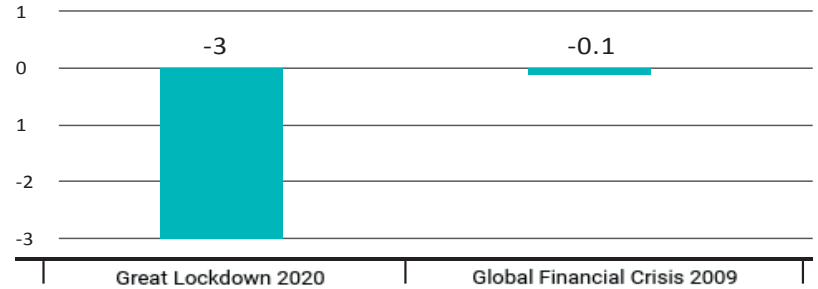
This economic crisis has worsened, compared to other crises, because during economic crises consumers typically spend from their savings and resort to family support to continue spending. Hence, consumption is relatively less affected. However, this time a unique combination of factors, most notably the voluntary social distancing and lockdown, led to a decrease in consumption and demand. Consequently, companies decreased their investments when faced by sharp decline in demand.

International economic and financial institutions unanimously agree that this economic crisis is deeper and sharper than the 2008 global financial crisis, also known as the real estate crisis. They believe that this is the worst crisis since the 1929 Great Depression, as clarified by the following IMF chart:

The Great Lockdown
The world economy will experience the worst recession since the Great Depression.

(real GDP growth, year-on-year percent change)



Source: IMF, *World Economic Outlook*.

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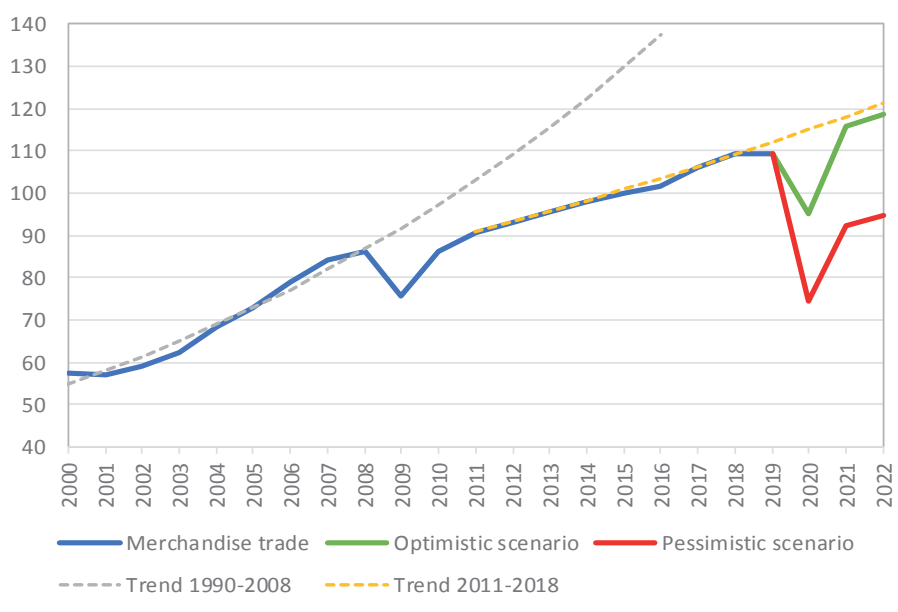
Because of the nature of preventive measures against the pandemic, which essentially focus on lockdown and restrictions on movement, foreign trade was among the most affected sectors. A WTO report released in April 2020 expected foreign trade to decrease by 13-23 per cent because of the measures the states have adopted to confront the pandemic[12].

Such a sharp decline in commercial activities due to the pandemic during the first half of 2020 arrived upon a backdrop of decline in international trade in 2019. "It

turned out that the growth in international trade has effectively stopped towards the end of last year (2019), and towards the 4th quarter of 2019, the trading of goods recorded 1 percent less decrease, compared to the previous year. WTO added that the reason was the continuous trade tensions, an indication that largely reflects the aggressive approach towards international trade adopted by U.S. president Donald Trump"[13].

WTO projected in June for the second quarter of 2020 "an 18 percent decrease in global trade on an annual basis." Director-general Roberto Azevêdo said in his semi-annual review, "although the full-fledged impact of the pandemic has not been fully reflected in the trade statistics yet, projections indicate that it will be major"[14].

According to IMF, which had pessimistic projections on the impact of the crisis on global trade, "The synchronized nature of the downturn has amplified domestic disruptions around the globe. Trade contracted by close to –3.5 percent (year over year) in the first quarter, reflecting weak demand, the collapse in cross-border tourism, and supply dislocations related to shutdowns exacerbated in some cases by trade restrictions"[15].



The following chart portrays the deteriorating foreign trade indicators, according to the WTO report[16]:

In addition to its impact on growth indicators and the size of foreign trade, the crisis deeply affected most other economic indicators. In terms of inflation, for example:

"Average inflation in advanced economies had dropped about 1.3 percentage points since the end of 2019, to 0.4 percent (year over year) as of April 2020, while in emerging market economies it had fallen 1.2 percentage points, to 4.2 percent. Downward price pressure from the decline in aggregate demand, together with the effects of lower fuel prices, seems to have more than offset any upward cost-push pressure from supply interruptions so far"[17].

IMF expects sharp increases in budget deficits, so that the average overall fiscal deficit would reach 14% of the overall GDP in 2020, i.e., an increase of 10 percentage points from last year, which is equivalent to a leap of 19 percentage points compared to last year.

This in turn will lead to an increase in public debt. Reports indicate that the crisis "has led to a surge in government debt and deficits because of steep contraction in output and ensuing fall in revenues. Under the baseline scenario, global public debt is expected to reach an all-time high, exceeding 101 percent of GDP in 2020–21—a surge of 19 percentage points from a year ago. Meanwhile, the average overall fiscal deficit is expected to soar to 14 percent of GDP in 2020, 10 percentage points higher than last year"[18].

The crisis was further aggravated because of the drop and fluctuation in the price of oil, which constitutes a basic commodity in industry, trade and other aspects of the economic cycle. In March, oil prices plunged to US$22 per barrel, half its price at the beginning of the month, resulting in a drop of the expected growth rate in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries by 2.6 percentage points. Oil experts attribute this to two factors: the first is the 9% decrease in demand resulting from the global economic recession in 2020 and the second is the war of prices in the oil market during March, particularly between Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation[19].

The social repercussions of the economic crisis

The economic crisis also had serious ramifications for economic indicators with social dimensions, the gravest being unemployment rates. According to the fifth edition of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Monitor, entitled "Covid-19 and the World of Work," "Working hour losses for the second quarter of 2020 relative to the last quarter of 2019 are estimated to reach 14.0 per cent worldwide (equivalent to 400 million full-time jobs) (on the basis of 48-hour work week). This is much higher than the estimates of the previous Monitor edition (issued on 27 May), amounting to 10.7 per cent (i.e. 305 million full-time jobs)"[20].

Guy Ryder, ILO director-general, said, "As the pandemic and the jobs crisis evolve, the need to protect the most vulnerable becomes even more urgent. For millions of workers, no income means no food, no security and no future. Millions of businesses around the world are barely breathing. They have no savings or access to credit. These are the real faces of the world of work. If we don't help them now, these enterprises will simply perish"[21].

The impact of unemployment is social-sensitive, as it has a larger impact on women. ILO noted that "female workers have been more adversely affected than others, which means losing the modest progress achieved in gender equality during the past decades, and the aggravation of gender inequalities in work"[22]. ILO attributes this to the high rate of females in some of the hardest hit economic sectors, such as housing, food, sales and manufacturing. At the global level, around 510 million females (around 40% of all female workers) work in the four most affected sectors, compared to 36.6% of men.

Furthermore, women dominate the domestic work, healthcare and social work sectors, where they are more susceptible to losing income and to Covid-19 infection while also having a harder time obtaining social protection. The disproportionate distribution of unpaid care work, prevalent before the pandemic, increased during the crisis because schools and care services shut down and the entire family was often at home.

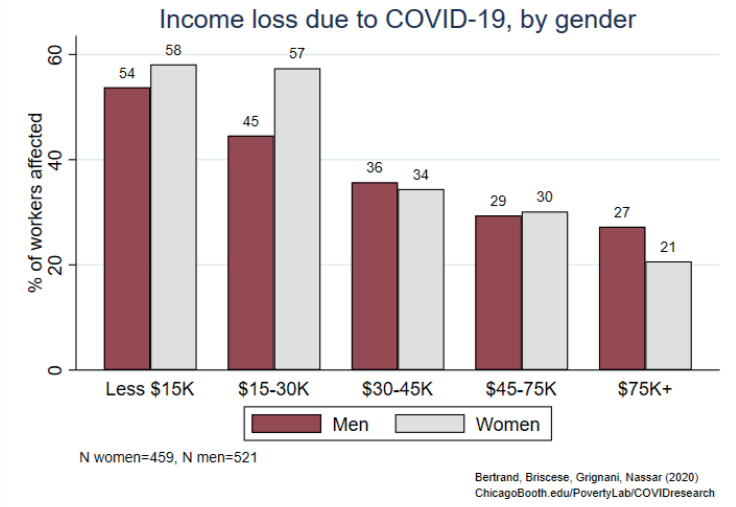
As expected, these sharp increases in unemployment rates led to a proportionate increase in poverty rates, another indicator with extremely important social dimensions. There are ample indicators that reveal that the impact of the pandemic and the consequent economic crisis will be hardest on the poorest, because of the loss of jobs, loss of remittances of immigrants and expatriate workers, the increase in prices and the halt of services such as education and healthcare.

The World Bank, which prioritised combatting poverty during the past decade, said, "It is expected that the poverty rates will increase for the first time since 1998, as the global economy falls into recession. The world will suffer from a severe drop in per capita GDP, and the prolonged crisis will eliminate all achieved progress during the past five years"[23].

Making projections, the World Bank was pessimistic, stating, "estimates indicate that 40 to 60 million persons will fall into extreme poverty (living on less than $1.90 a day) in 2020, compared to 2019, because of the pandemic, based on the size of the economic shock. The global poverty rate may increase by 0.3 to 0.7 percent to reach around 9% in 2020"[24].

Although not enough time has passed since the pandemic outbreak and the resulting crisis to allow for sufficient academic studies, several published studies indicate that the impact of the crisis will be greater for more vulnerable social groups. For example, a group of researchers from two specialised centres at the University of Chicago conducted a field survey on a random sample consisting of 1,400 male and female Americans on 6-11 April 2020. The study concluded that the social groups with the lowest incomes in the United States, especially women, are more subject to losing their jobs because of the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. The following chart sums up this conclusion[25]:

It seems that the survey's findings—that the crisis has affected women more than men, increasing women's suffering and exacerbating inequality—may be generalised outside the United States. The most recent IMF report indicated that "the loss in income was not gender equal, as the impact of the pandemic affected women of the lower income groups suffered more than others in some countries"[26].



On the other hand, the impact on countries has also been variable, with poor countries impacted more than rich countries. "The Covid-19 pandemic caused grave losses at the human and economic levels, especially in Low-Income Countries, in light of the weaknesses they have"[27]. No doubt, this will make poor countries poorer, increasing the gap, already large and unhealthy, between rich and poor countries.

Other long-term socio-economic dimensions of the crisis include education. "UNESCO data shows that nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries, 94% of the world's student population, were affected by the closure of educational institutions at the peak of the crisis, a figure that stands at 1 billion today. As many as 100 countries have yet to announce a date for schools to reopen"[28]. The deterioration of education has adverse long-term impacts on human resources, the essence of human capital, which constitutes today the most important asset for socio-economic development.

Globalisation continues despite the economic crisis

The economic crisis resulting from the pandemic dealt a second blow to the global economy's tendency towards globalisation, the first blow being Trump's anti-globalisation policies, characterised by encouraging protectionism and other strategies to discourage globalisation. This has, in turn, started a debate about the future of globalisation, usually linked with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Bloc in 1991 and the prevalence of the capitalist economic system all over the world.

Nevertheless, one should not overlook the fact that economic globalisation, which received a major push via the transformation of all world economies towards capitalist systems, is firstly an attribute of the capitalist system. Secondly, it is based on technical development, especially in information and communication and the ability to move and access goods, raw material and capital. This subsequently led to a decline in the importance of geography and ultimately to the emergence of a transboundary global market that transcends geographic, political and demographic boundaries[29].

In other words, modern technology and the world unity of the economic system has linked economic enterprises to global markets and made them more effective, feasible and profitable than state-bound enterprises. Accordingly, globalisation is neither an option nor a conspiracy, but an imperative resulting from the evolution of the capitalist system and technological advancement.

Although the phenomenon of economic globalisation is one thing, and global economic hegemony is another, they have become intertwined simply because the economically stronger states benefit more from global markets and from economic globalisation. This made states with stronger economies—most prominently the United States—keen on globalisation, as it increases its opportunities for domination. What has changed, then, so that the U.S. government under Trump positions itself against globalisation[30]?

One explanation is the gradual imbalance in the global economy represented by the accelerated growth of other economies, most notably China. This made China and other countries rapidly increase their share of the global market, reducing the American capacity to couple globalisation and hegemony. American policymakers were therefore less enthusiastic towards globalisation, which provides near-equal opportunities to benefit from the open global market, i.e., globalisation, thereby offering better opportunities for large economies to compete with the American economy. This decreased Washington's enthusiasm for globalisation and pushed it to adopt measures that curb the accelerated process of globalisation in the world economy.

More deeply, while globalisation offers equal opportunity, it does not offer equitable opportunity. The widening gaps between the few very rich and poor have been

represented in the United States by a working class with stagnating wages—a group ripe for populist rhetoric and clamouring for change from political leaders that they view as part of the mega-rich elite.

The measures against the Covid-19 pandemic arrived against this backdrop of the American attack on globalisation, leading to a decline in global markets, a decline in supply chains and the smooth flow of raw material and commodities, and a drop in the phenomena of global integration, along with increased protectionism. The Trump administration used the epidemic to evade further global integration, a trend that had started before the crisis.

China's attempts to push the balance of power in its favour increased American concerns. "While the Trump administration used the pandemic to evade global integration, China used the crisis to show its determination to lead the world as the first country that suffered the [Covid-19] attack. China suffered heavily during the past three months, but is currently recovering while the rest of the world is succumbing to the epidemic. This poses a problem for Chinese industrialists, some of whom are starting to recover, but confront poor demand in the countries facing the crisis. However, this provides China with a short-term opportunity to influence conduct of other states"[31].

These developments have led to a debate in academic and economist circles on the resilience of economic globalisation against the challenges of Covid-19 and the policies of the Trump administration. For example, Chris Miller, director of Foreign Policy Research Institute's Eurasia program and assistant professor of International History at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, entitled his study at Foreign Policy Research Institute, "Will Covid-19 Sink Globalization?" In this study, he clearly argues that the challenges may be tougher than the globalisation's resilience. He said, "Watching the news, it is easy to think that the Covid-19 pandemic will sink globalisation. The number of cargo ships setting off for the United States declined by 10 percent in March compared to the previous year, the seventh consecutive month of declines. The cost of shipping goods by air has almost doubled, further restricting trade. The flow of people has plummeted, too, with many countries restricting foreign visitors due to the virus"32.

Geoffrey Gertz, a researcher in global economy at Brookings Institute, discussed the attempts of some governments, particularly the United States, to create deglobalisation. He indicates that the current crisis has led to criticism of global supply chain vulnerabilities, pointing out that the Trump administration is creating a new $25 billion "reshoring fund" to disconnect supply chains from China and encourage U.S. firms to bring manufacturing back to the States.

However, he later acknowledges that "Many outside analysts are skeptical that such plans for deglobalization will succeed. They rightly note that contemporary global supply chains are extremely complex, the outcome of millions of individual uncoordinated firm decisions. Any attempts to unwind these processes will be cumbersome and costly. Although Covid-19 has prompted firms to revisit the trade-offs between efficiency and resiliency in their own supplier relationships, this does not mean that they'll welcome government interference"33.

On the other hand, other researchers in global economics believe that the recent pressures on globalisation might lead to a limited decline in globalisation for objective reasons, namely lockdowns and restricted movement. But once the pandemic is under control, globalisation will be back on track because advanced technology has taken the modes of production to a level in which globalisation has become more efficient and profitable. Consequently, the interests of global capitalists will prevail again.

The most notable contribution in this direction is an important article published in Harvard Business Review on 20 May 2020 by Steven A. Altman, a renowned researcher in global economic studies, who wondered whether Covid-19's negative impact on globalisation would be long term. He concluded that these strikes against globalisation were not lethal, and that globalisation might bend to such pressure but might not break, rebounding after the crisis ends. He concluded, "As leaders wrestle to guide their organizations through the Covid-19 pandemic, decisions running the gamut from where to sell to how to manage supply chains hinge on expectations about the future of globalization. The pandemic has prompted a new wave of globalization obituaries, but the latest data and forecasts imply that leaders should plan for—and shape—a world where both globalization and anti-globalization pressures remain enduring features of the business environment"34.

Hence, although globalisation has received two consecutive blows—from the Trump administration and Covid-19—the factors and connections that strengthen globalisation and the interests of its beneficiaries are extremely resilient. The infrastructure built for globalisation over the past four decades is capable of resisting obstacles and destructive elements. Amongst the most prominent examples are the

supply chains that constitute the main veins of the globalised economic system. In this regard, Robin Brooks, chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, says, "Supply chains are physical things like bridges, factories, ships, railway lines. Those things take a long time to disrupt and the virus and work stoppages we are currently seeing aren't disrupting those"35. The title of a Bloomberg study scrutinising encouraging and discouraging factors reflects its main conclusion: "Globalisation Faces a Bend-But-Won't-Break Crisis on Coronavirus"36.

It is not difficult to argue that the concerns of Trump and his administration and the desire to limit globalisation are realistic. "Globalization had gotten out of control," U.S. commerce secretary Wilbur Ross offered in a 6 February speech at the Oxford Union in which he defended the Trump administration's assault on global trade in part by complaining that it now "takes 200 suppliers in 43 countries on six continents to make an iPhone"37.

As for the role of the nation-state, which the crisis has apparently bolstered and which is used as an indication of the decline of globalisation, this too seems mostly temporary, since the capitalist economic system, especially its neoliberal tendencies, has relied on the state for its rescue from each crisis—from 1929 to 2008 to 2020 and all the smaller crises in-between. After recovery, we typically see the powerful pushback of the state to again keep at a reduced role required by economic globalisation.

The last World Bank report entitled "Trading for Development in the Age of Global Value Chains (GVCs)" concluded, "GVCs can continue to boost growth, create better jobs and reduce poverty, provided that developing countries undertake deeper reforms and industrial countries pursue open, predictable policies. Technological change is likely to be more of a boon than a curse for trade and GVCs"38.

This is rather a paradox; combatting the spread of Covid-19 required measures that indirectly had a negative impact on globalisation, although the pandemic itself is global by nature, hence combatting it requires a global plan. Confronting this universal pandemic requires universal efforts. As professor Fadi Bardawil explained, "the pandemic breakout was accompanied by the spread of metaphors like: 'We are all in the same boat', indicating the risks that threaten humanity at large, and our collective responsibility to avoid it. We shifted from the metaphor of the one happy village during the days of applauding the emergence of a new world, to the boat under the threat of sinking after the global pandemic breakout"39.

Conclusions

The general conclusion of this study is that this crisis has aftershocks and will leave prominent scars on economic, social, political and cultural life all worldwide for a long time. Specifically, the study reached the following conclusions:

1. Despite the short duration of the crisis, all economic and social indicators show that the economic crisis resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic will be deeper, wider and more serious than the 1929 Great Depression. This includes the extent of decline in all economic or social indicators, or the depth and spread of such decline to almost all countries of the world.

2. One of the most important outcomes of the crisis is that it will lead to expediting the process of transforming the world from unipolar to bipolar or multipolar. Different states addressed the pandemic with discrepant capacities and expertise; consequently, some states were affected more than others, which explains the increased tension in international relations in the context of addressing the crisis. The two experts in Chinese affairs Kurt M. Campbell and Rush Doshi summarised the situation by saying, "While Washington hesitates, Beijing moves quickly and proficiently to benefit from the openness created by U.S. mistakes, and fill the vacuum to position itself as a global leader in responding to epidemics"[40].

3. In light of the social ramifications of the economic crisis, in particular its disproportionate impact on different social groups, the possible outcome may be an increase in the rich-poor gap in the different countries, whereby the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. This will lead to social instability, aggravated by the decline in governmental spending ability, leading to a deterioration of social services, most notably health and education. Ultimately, this harms the most vulnerable groups (the poor and women) in some societies more than others.

4. Similarly, since the economic crisis and its social impact are discrepant in different states, the crisis will increase the gap between the rich and the poor states, consequently increasing political instability and aggravating political turmoil.

5. It seems that the crisis will lead to a slowdown in economic globalisation. However, this is mostly temporary. So far, the crisis seems neither to lead

to deglobalisation nor cause a major setback. It will temporarily slow down globalisation, which will restore its role at the end of the crisis.

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Endnotes

1 Faculty member of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies and professor in International Relations at Abu Lughod Institute for International Relations, Birzeit University.

2 WHO headquarters noted the first cases in Wuhan on that date, and China notified WHO of the beginning of the outbreak of the epidemic on 3 January 2020, The chain of events of the epidemic can be followed at https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-06-2020-covidtimeline.

3 Worldometer: China. https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/china/.

4 Johns Hopkins Coronoavirus Resource Center. "Covid-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University." https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html.

5 International Monetary Fund Report, "World Economic Outlook, April 2020." https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2019/03/28/world-economic-outlook-april-2019.

6 https://www.amf.org.ae/ar/content/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D-9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B-5%D9%8A%D9%86

7 https://www.bbc.com/arabic/business-40283541.

8 https://www.aleqt.com/2019/08/10/article_1654556.html.

9 International Monetary Fund, "World Economic Outlook Update, June 2020." https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020.

10 Economists consider the economy to be in a state of recession if it has a negative growth rate for two consecutive quarters.

11 World Economic Output Reports, June 2020, https://www.imf.org/ar/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020.

12 World Trade Organisation Report "World Trade and GDP, 2019-20," April 2020. https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/wts2020_e/wts2020chapter03_e.pdf.

13 https://www.bbc.com/arabic/business-52222465.

14 https://www.ecssr.ae/reports_analysis/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%89-%D9%83%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%B6%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%83%D9%88%D9%81/

15 "World Economic Outlook, June 2020."

16 World Trade Organisation, "Trade Set to Plunge as Covid-19 Pandemic Upends Global Economy," 8 April 2020, https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres20_e/pr855_e.htm.

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A life haunted by anxiety

"I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones." –*Albert Einstein*

Khaled Hourani

Foreword

Most major events require time to be fully grasped and clear in the mind. Time is needed to write about events and to contemplate their meaning, not only in regards to their direct impact upon politics, thought and economics, but also to see their lasting resonance upon social structures, human conduct and the culture at large. Put differently, this lapse of time is necessary to alleviate the black clouds surrounding an incident, allowing us to clarify our vision and to understand and historicise our experience. In short, time is a prerequisite for meaningful contemplation, for how can we produce literature, art or even write articles about an event while we still live amidst it as it transforms?

The repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic are still evolving and in continuous flux and new facts emerging tomorrow may very well abrogate what we read or conclude today. Therefore, rather than mapping conclusions, writing is an exercise in thinking, an attempt to understand this strange situation. We write, read and exchange ideas, then recycle them around the pandemic and its impact on human life. We do this possibly for self-assurance, to

> reduce expected losses or to promote the values of human solidarity during crises and disasters against evil and hardship. We write to understand whether we—personally and collectively—are able to absorb the shock, or indeed if we are not.

Writing this text in Arabic, the only word that Arabic spellcheck underlined in red was *corona* (Covid-19). According to spellcheck, corona does not exist, even if it widely circulated and is gravely impacting the lives of people all over the world. The issue here is of course not merely linguistic. The pandemic presented a general, overarching and overwhelming challenge to humanity, regardless of whether it had officially entered the lexicon. It has overwhelmed both the vocabularies and thoughts of people from the moment scenes of people in Wuhan collapsing in the street were broadcast. These scenes were like a nightmare or a horror movie, and has not yet ended.

It is a good thing that for now the media has stopped publishing traumatising pictures of crowded hospitals and hallways packed with ailing patients and burnt-out doctors. This was quickly replaced with footage of playgrounds that had become field hospitals and interviews with experts broadcasting preventive instructions against the pandemic: maintain distancing, wear masks and gloves, stay home and wash hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. People started to ridicule these basic instructions, often resorting to exchanging jokes and anecdotes as if they were not afraid of the disease.

Corona is a word that barrelled through all languages and dialects, without the need for translation nor introduction. Preeminent and relentless, the word entered people's thoughts, behaviours, knowledge and spheres of ignorance alike. Whilst terms such as *SARS*, *Ebola* or *the plague* entered into people's lexicon, they never permeated as widely as corona; those epidemics spread in limited geographies and we were often watching them remotely as a media topic, similar to the swine flu, the bird flu and mad cow disease. The permeation of the term corona resulted because the virus became a common enemy that threatened everyone. This placed the notion of a joint human destiny at the forefront, encouraging institutional powers and states to seek solutions for the same threat despite the barriers and conflicts between them.

We do not know when spellcheck will cease suspecting the accuracy of this word. This is to say that we still do not know the scale of the repercussions on different aspects of life. If this pandemic ends in the next few months (by finding a vaccine, for example), then it is possible for life to resume as normal and to overcome the negative consequences on the economy, politics and our social lives. However, if it lingers longer than other epidemics, then our previous tools of analysis, methods for thinking and former practices will become invalid. They will be proven useless for finding quick solutions to the pandemic's political, economic, social and cultural repercussions. Indeed, they may never be useful again as life may never return to what it used to be.

It is true that humanity has suffered from crises—wars and catastrophic pandemics—before, each impactful in some way. Although it seems that humanity has recovered from each of these, the current crisis seems different and more profound, as it opened the world's eyes to many problems all put on the table at once. Each is a serious and persistent problem for several reasons, and I herein point to only some. This simultaneity of problems made visible by the pandemic suggests we may also require an intellectual revolution. Despite its importance, this is necessary not only in the sphere of scientific research (as a means to confront diseases and epidemics) but is crucial in the level of international cooperation for many issues rather than conflict and strife, including reparation for the unprecedented damages the pandemic inflicted on the global economy. The unprecedented speed and scale of damages requires new and more equitable frameworks for political, social and economic thought that take into consideration basic human rights, including the rights of those facing structural disadvantage, such as Black communities, women and minorities. This may require proposing new ideas and adopting new policies and measures to end corruption and reduce inequalities in the world and in diverse communities. In addition, before and above all, end occupation, conflict and wars that aggravate human suffering everywhere.

A temporary crisis or disaster is experienced differently from one that lasts for a lengthy period—as is the case with this particular pandemic. This experience is also different because we live amidst a confusing flow of continuous information. New media allows for an abundance of often-conflicting analysis and commentary (sometimes absurd and horrific); however, these forms also leave room wide open for stupidity and rumour. In the past, spreading rumours was not possible at such a scale, especially prior to television when newspapers and radio stations were the only sources that controlled the news. Now, social media, without factcheckers or editors, has become the first source of information in many parts of the world. Nevertheless, these platforms constitute the primary place for people to vent, where they communicate lockdowns, closures and distancing policies, and as a main source

of reading the news and following rapidly changing developments. In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, mass interaction on related developments, repercussions and news globally exceeded the focus on any other topic. My mother told me that it was through Facebook that she first heard of the Spanish Flu, a new awareness via news of corona. What this makes me ask is whether what we experience is about much more that the outburst of the virus (one whose threat will eventually end). Perhaps what we experience is an outburst of information—a reshaping of our lives with an awareness of viruses and contagion but also insight on the impact of our contemporary lifestyle.

In the past when travel and mobility were limited, it was possible to slow down a pandemic or to contain it to one country or region. It was also possible to contain the repercussions. Now, however, the repercussions exceed the disease and virus itself, as their widescale impact is felt across entwined economies and transnational businesses. A pandemic in the days of the cart and horse is different from a pandemic in the days cars, trains, planes and airports. The spread of the pandemic in not the same everywhere; it spread more in powerful states than in others, like Europe, the Americas, China, Russia, Brazil and the Middle East. It is true that whilst the damage afflicted by the coronavirus may be temporary, the political, economic and cultural turmoil resulting from the pandemic is more serious. It may indeed last for several generations.

Covid is a disaster that proves that what happens in Wuhan can affect, say, a market in Brazil. Equally, the opposite is also true: a meal in one kitchen may affect the life of the whole globe. It also demonstrates how degrees of democracy in the West (or the lack thereof in China) did not prevent the outbreak of the pandemic, but rather expedited its spread.

Shock

The pandemic spread all over the world and affected it for longer than expected, according to WHO expectations. This special and unprecedented experience caused shock and confusion everywhere. The sudden life transformation altered biology, reversed many concepts and left its impact on human behaviour, most notably on science, culture and art. There is shock, confusion and attempts to cope with the state of isolation and quarantine, and come together to question the feasibility of knowledge production and consumption. The pandemic nurtured superficial instincts at the expense of deep human instincts.

Addressing the trauma and confusion resulting from the sudden outbreak of the pandemic was not easy. Trauma became visible in the people's conduct, the ways they explained what was happening, their multiple theories, strategies for coping and the launching of many initiatives. Almost all of these involve staying home, washing hands and keeping distance in fear of others as well as in fear for themselves. The simple act of going out of the house has acquired new meaning, as home became the last resort. In this time, we might ask: where do people's dreams, ambitions and plans go? Where do they become housed? Across rich and poor countries, we are united by this pandemic mostly by our apparent confusion. This was also reflected in cultural organisations, institutions and places of worship. Artists and spiritual leaders are seemingly equally confused.

All of humanity was, and is, traumatised. In my capacity as one of these traumatised individuals, I believe that our present attempts to say or do something against this pandemic are mere gibbering and wrangling, no more. We try to imbue this human catastrophe with some comprehension in an absurd dramatic sense, exactly as I am doing now.

We must recognise that we are both traumatised and speechless. This is the first important thing. The coup that occurred in our life and our existence, resulting from a grave incident, has quickly placed our human civilisation ahead of thorny questions about the use of scientific and technological progress, culture and information technology. So far, we cannot assess the gravity of the pandemic. All we do is follow the news with total incapacity, talk and chat, and exchange pictures, comments and strange ideas.

We laugh, manoeuvre and watch movies, which have become available and free online. How unfortunate! How can anyone really 'watch' movies? This "Coronavirus" horror movie has fully infiltrated all screens and all audiences. What do we read? And why? We read, detach ourselves and get further isolated. We shop at the supermarket repeatedly. We go to the pharmacy (the ultimate corona destination!) to buy mostly sanitisers and masks. All this may be no more than a futile attempt to overcome the horror confronting people as they face the isolation, suspicion, and fear that surrounds them daily, including from those closest to them.

What did scholars, philosophers, scientists, clergymen, politicians, physicians and pharmacists say in the face of all this? What was their comfort and their prognosis? Mostly nothing, just basic precautions and impotent explanations. Initially it was as if some of them projected a confident understanding of everything, an assumed

intelligence that would even predict what will happen in the future. The shock across the board became evident after everyone announced his or her failure, despite relentless attempts to do or say something that reassured the tormented communities. In spite of this, everyone maintains hope that exhausted scientists, researchers and doctors will find a solution—a possibility of success we anticipate with great anxiety.

We wake up every day to increasing numbers, as if the infected and deceased were mere figures, despite the fact that each one of them has a mother, father, brother, son, sister, friend, lover or any of the endless human relationships that shape and give value to our lives. Those are not just numbers, but whole communities and families, lovers whose suffering is compounded because they cannot kiss their beloved on the forehead in farewell. This in itself is a full-fledged tragedy.

As time moves on, we must not forget what the media chose to report, including the words of leading politicians. For example, before he was infected, British prime minister Boris Johnson said very abruptly and straightforwardly, "bid your beloved farewell." Here, he was referring to the elderly. Even if this was true, is this how we choose to say such a horrific thing—with crudity and bitterness that terrorises people? This is not to say that people easily did what governments and international agencies advised. What did the executive director of the WHO say at the press conference in which the coronavirus was declared a global pandemic? She said, "Wash your hands with water and soap and keep your distance." This advice seemed akin to nothing, a sheer incapacity to fight the situation—indeed, in a historic and crucial moment for all humanity, her words were not dissimilar to those that might have been offered by a nurse at a hospital in war-ravaged Yemen.

The confusion of scientists! After space exploration, tremendous scientific progress, deciphering the human genome, genetic modification and other impressive scientific advances, the best scientific advice is as simple as "wash your hands and stay at home" (until God decides your fate). And what of clergymen, what did most in the world do? They simply raised white flags to their brethren dressed in white. Several brought doctors to the pulpits to deliver Friday sermons, in what seemed like a (belated) acknowledgement of the role and importance of science. In so doing, they in fact retreated from their role. Those doctors mostly explained, in very straightforward language, that there was no cure for the pandemic so far, nor a vaccine, and that this might take time. They stressed that prevention was better than a cure and asserted the importance of hygiene (washing the hands and face with soap), reiterating that cleanliness is part of faith, something addressed by sheikhs in mosques and dear priests in churches. In times of survival, then, do we count only on science, despite its incapacity? I asked this, observing that most clergymen left the places of worship empty at a time when people were most in need of consolation and prayer.

Mirroring this, what did the museums and movie theatres advise? They offered us the ability to watch movies freely, to see artwork and to have fun at home. Is this the recreation they advocate for now? Does this solve a rapidly unfolding and intensifying human tragedy? Those generous initiatives came at a time when watching was rendered unbearable, begging the question: who are the audiences in the moment?

Stay at home

As we attempt to envision our fate, we follow the coronavirus story and its repercussions from home. Patience has been necessary, not only as our primary option in the face of calamitiy, but also because of the lack of alternatives to confront despair and to maintain calm. This attempt may be prolonged, but until when? Will humanity be rescued upon publishing this article, for example? Alternatively, will we continue to suffer? Will we experience only limited repercussions of the pandemic? Will its impact on human life, behaviour and work patterns quickly recede after the horrendous danger passes, or will our lives deteriorate further? We know nothing and our questions merely increase and accelerate.

I must admit that I hesitated a lot to write about this topic. Where do I gain the ability to speak amidst all this dystopia? And to start with, do I actually have anything to say? Is there anything new I can add to the thousands of comments, conclusions and positions that the media dumps upon us daily? Even my emotions and perceptions have become similar and convergent to the anxieties and uncertainties that I feel and see in others. Is there any use engaging in discourse when life is threatened by isolation, the unknown and absence?

Nevertheless, writing continues to be necessary in times of isolation and perhaps in all times—even when it is merely writing a diary to record the ambiguity of the moment in which one writes, or to explicitly announce how much we do not know. Sometimes speech is golden while silence is silver. People try to organise their thoughts through writing and to ask people to gain power through proposing

ideas other than despair. Let us recall here the words of Avicenna (Abu Ali Sina), who said, "Illusion is half of the disease and reassurance is half of the medicine, but patience is the first step to healing."

There is no value in predictions in the face of corona; rather, it is sufficient to contemplate the moment in which we live. How can, or should we live? How shall we behave? How can be build a new future? Shall we write work that's focussed on analysing the past, or planning and formulating the future? We do not know. Perhaps this is the present challenge: reckoning with the idea that humankind must declare their ignorance and doubt existing theories, science and political systems, raising questions and announcing the failure of our responses. Where did this damned disease come from? And how? At least those two substantial questions have not been answered as of the time these lines were written. Instead, allegations are exchanged on the basis of ideology and political and economic interests, rather than science or the truth, the very things people may need at this moment.

Was this virus manufactured? Was it accidentally released from a biological laboratory here or there? It is possible to consider this pandemic a result of the previous irrational conduct and policies that have dominated the world, the excessive abuse of nature, deteriorating educational, economic and health policies, climate change and the greedy investment in everything with no consideration for the minimal safety of people or the planet. It seems as though this moment is the progeny of a dubious yesterday, a culmination of ultimate decline.

A person thinks of all these issues and more while at home, not at a research centre. People think of the big questions of the universe as they tend to their garden or prepare food. They think every time they lie down on the sofa in front of the television or in the bedroom idle and helpless. A deceived person thinks thoughts like: how can there be no vaccine for this virus, which water and soap can kill? One day a person thinks like U.S. president Donald Trump and another day like the WHO executive director, who spoke about washing hands while her organisation declared the coronavirus a pandemic. One begins to wonder why the Arabic spellcheck underlined only the words 'corona' and 'Trump' in red!

It is 7:30 am and the clock insists on providing the time of a day even whilst we sit in isolation at home. Shall we listen to the early morning news bulletin or shall we wait for the spokesperson's debriefing? Shall we be reassured of our own surroundings first or shall we perceive ourselves within the framework of the world at large? Which is better for coping: what happens in our private life or in life in general? What guarantees salvation for people? Here is humanity living this common destiny for the first time and at such a scale. However, each nation or group lives it differently depending on its own circumstances and experiences. Some states are economically powerful, advanced medically and can absorb shocks. Other states cannot provide the minimum required to sustain life. Living in an independent house with a view is different from living in a small and crowded house, or in a tent or caravan. Is this virus political and racist par excellence, or is it completely neutral, infecting the rich and the poor alike, and the good and the bad indiscriminately?

An extension of us, this virus spreads through narrow and wide-open spaces—stretching our sensory awareness of the other and of our surroundings. Is it appropriate to listen to music, for example, to kill the daily and recurrent boredom? The music that softly infiltrates my house from the neighbour's moves the heart as it mixes with the sound of the birds and the light wind that moves the balcony's curtains. With isolation, lack of movement and business, the sounds of nature have become clearer and the living beings breathe their moments of calm. This may be just a small gesture in the larger turmoil of the universe.

We reconsider the time again. Today is Tuesday, it is one o'clock and I have done nothing. Time moves, rotates endlessly without a specific finishing line or integral appointments. Everything is postponed. What you can do today, you can also do tomorrow. No one waits. Put the thoughts aside, get up and cultivate a plant. I tell myself that I must complete that article; I thank God for it as it keeps me busy. The thoughts and memories swim in my head. There is no need for disclosure and complaint; maybe this or that thought are not rational now; something controls the brain. Emptiness, numbness, the outside world withdraws in front of my eyes. The person continuously delves into such a silent monologue. I contacted my friend the dentist, asking him about some pain I feel in my chest. He did not answer me, but only said, "Get well, dear," and gave me the telephone number of another specialist, who did not answer. Clearly, there is no time for the other health problems that we face. It is three o'clock now, Sunday, and the Muazzin is calling for the afternoon prayer, singing in a special tune like the usual calls to prayer, "pray at home," the phrase to the call for prayer added since the coronavirus Nakba. It is 8 p.m., but I cannot tell what day it is. I think of India and the population density there and of Gaza and what will happen there. No doubt that every person thinks of all the others, albeit each in their own separate chamber.

Doubt and confusion

After the shock came doubt and disbelief and its manifestations in oneself and in the things around us. Doubt is not only in the past or the future, but also in the present moment. Scepticism and uncertainty accompany major crises. I was sceptical towards the reality of the coronavirus pandemic, the size of the measures and the accompanying media coverage. I was sceptical more than once regarding the increasing numbers of cases and I voiced my doubts. I was sceptical not because of a belief in a conspiracy theory or otherwise. We had doubts even in science and its limitations, doubts in the political systems and their reactions. These operate as a defence mechanism sometimes and an attempt to explain at a moment of inability—a shadow of doubt even over the undoubtable.

I had, and still have, doubt towards the adopted measures and quarantine policies hinging on the terrorisation of people. I have doubts in the size and form of measures whose adverse impact may be worse than the risk of and will have repercussions farther than the virus itself, such as closing down businesses, ending livelihoods and unemployment. I doubt of our integrity and capacity in producing this virus! Humankind is guilty sometimes and noble and innocent other times. Is any of us actually innocent in this case?

I had doubts in the 'system' and in the WHO, which, like other international agencies, is susceptible to doubt as it is vulnerable to corruption and to being corrupted. It is hard to convince people of world polity, with the health, economic and other systems that underlie it, although it is important for people to be rest reassured of their health, the safety of their beloved and so on.

Nevertheless, this pandemic managed to leave its footprint on the world after, or herewith. However, who will pay the heavier price and who will address the failures? Will things be equal in all countries? Do the Germans or the South Koreans feel the same existential anxiety as we do in the Arab World? If everyone is confused, are the good and the bad equally confused and doubtful? I had my doubts towards the isolation policy but I complied with the instructions.

Things are still ambiguous and do not encourage optimism for the most part, nor an improvement in the deeply dystopic human conditions prevalent in some countries and communities. Even before the coronavirus, the idea of taking things easy, calming down, taking a deep breath and contemplating ideas about life and the world was quite attractive. Planet Earth needs to take breath; has it taken it? This may indeed be merely a temporary 'pause', a still image in the extended reel of human life.

Two matters are confusing upon addressing this pandemic: First, all governments, systems and authorities, even the most corrupt, suddenly seemed to care for the health and safety of their citizens. The state and its institutions became the reference for such behaviour and the party to which all must listen. Second, intellectuals have become obedient in times of fear and their discourse is of no more use. The anarchist, the dervish and the revolutionary have all become fully compliant with the public safety instructions proposed by the states and the rulers, and the permanent opposition has shut up for a while.

Amidst the state of instinctive horror and fear from death, the citizens surrender to the state and its decisions. They willingly carry out orders, suspend suspicion and criticism and internalise censorship, control and instructions, adhering to them for salvation. People have mostly become subject to a complex that resembles crime and punishment, listening to discourse and harbouring feelings of guilt for which the penalty is always, "Stay at home, you reckless suspect; Wash your hands."

Art

In the face of this pandemic, artists in all art forms appear astounded. So far, we do not know of any reliable art project that expresses the moment, while many people have circulated several earlier artworks worth scrutinising. Many cultural institutions tried adapting: films, virtual exhibitions, music, discussions and messages of reassurance to keep terror at bay. Of course, responses varied among the different countries, institutions and artists. While this may have to do with art consumption and trading, art production is a separate issue and it definitely requires a longer period to pass until the event is fully grasped and digested. Art also needs an enabling environment, as artists do not exist or work in isolation from the conditions that surround them. Perhaps the rate of anxiety among artists is naturally higher. What does the artist think during these hard times? They think like other people when they cease to function in the face of fear: terror and all the other emotions. Moreover, society, exchange and solidarity are core issues in the artmaking process. When any or most of those elements are absent, the process becomes quite difficult. Art also gets confused in front of complicated life questions.

Art and culture in Palestine were affected just like in all other parts of the world. Art

and art institutions were confused on how to move forward and this is only natural, similarly to other activities that require direct audiences such as theatre, galleries and museums. How can it not be affected when the coronavirus has influenced museums and festivals all over the world—not only the Cannes Film Festival, but each neighbourhood, house and alley? The response of some institutions in Palestine was definitely not enough and at an official level, art was not considered one of the most adversely affected sectors, in contrast to countries like France and Germany, which adopted urgent policies that at least minimally preserved the lives of the creators. Priority has been given to health and social affairs and all sorts of challenges mark artistic production in Palestine, where there no compensation for art and artists and no unemployment allowances.

The public's need for art never stopped and even possibly increased, with the surplus of free time that people spend at home and their need for amusement and recreation, as well as their need to understand and project the big meaning, which art often grants. The people played music on balconies, with touching scenes coming from Italy and elsewhere. The symphony orchestra played music for the trees in Australia. Different forms of performance were innovated. Short films were produced, virtual platforms were opened to disseminate and circulate art. The audience enthusiastically watched science fiction movies and those predicting the end of the world, and films that depicted situations similar to the coronavirus pandemic were played repeatedly.

I am not sure that it is wise for art to express the pandemic. It may be better to encourage forgetting it and only learn from its lessons. What the people have experienced exceeds any depiction or prediction, and possibly requires a new consideration of the messages, forms and methods for presentation of art to make it more resilient and adaptive to changing circumstances. Although many things have proven their failure these days, art has fortunately proven that it is still possible.

At a time when the pandemic shut down William Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, we should remember that during the quarantine of the lethal plague, Shakespeare did not write about the pandemic, but used the time to create King Lear, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet. Today's Britain is an extremely advanced country for art and cultural production, and bearing in mind that there are over 1,100 theatres in England, the theatre's audience alone is larger than the audience of the English Football League. If wisdom is the ambition of the believer, what will be the case with the sceptical? Only God knows.

On a personal level, when I looked inside myself for the artist, I found the maintenance worker. I was not an artist; I did not feel that art could help me at that moment. The pandemic even destroyed my imagination and dreams, as it became a nightmare. Despite that, I felt alright. "My eyes could still see the moon was still in the sky," as Mahmoud Darwish put it.

Palestine, Where to?

The Palestinian people face the pandemic whilst also being subject to unprecedented measures of Israeli occupation. This occupation targets their very existence and seeks to eliminate the viability and methods of their struggle through the escalation of arbitrary measures, and—in realisation of Trump's promised "Deal of the Century"—the annexation of the Jordan Valley and parts of the Occupied Territories. Furthermore, the coronavirus pandemic and the financial and economic siege imposed by occupation made it quite hard to control the spread of the disease and its destructive economic repercussions on society. The Palestinian Authority does not control the crossing points and the borders, and consequently does not control those who enter or exit the limited land it controls, restricted to Area A. This situation has highlighted the role of occupation in aggravating the situation and even its direct responsibility for the continuous deterioration of the lives of Palestinians.

There are other local and universal contexts for this calamity. There is history, with large numbers of cases and mortality rates in Britain, Spain, Belgium, Italy and other European states. The health systems in those states were fragile and crumbled in light of the pandemic. What about those who have no sound health system? What about the essential medical equipment (and crucial ventilators) lacking in many countries, which is to say nothing of hospital beds (six beds to every one million people in Africa)? According to *Jeune Afrique* magazine, Sierra Leone, for example, has one ventilator, while Togo has four and Niger has five. Is this acceptable? Considering these horrifying statistics in addition to other preventable diseases, it is as if coronavirus came to expose the dystopic reality of the world.

A hospital director in Nigeria's capital Lagos reported that in a country with a population of over 200 million, there are only 320 Coronavirus cases. Among the reasons of the lack of spread of the disease in Nigeria, and Africa in general, is that most African societies are young and they do not have a elderly population. In some regions, many elderly people did overcome Ebola to live and to face the

coronavirus. There are of course many other reasons for these mortality rates, most notably deteriorating health conditions, the spread of poverty, proliferation of lethal diseases and armed conflict.

Let us come back to Palestine, to our particular city, our particular street. Let us come back home. Back into ourselves—to the smallest possible context. While this may seem impotent in the face of the larger context, there is real comfort to be found within ourselves; as Ihsan Abdel Qudous put it, "to find what keeps you busy away from it." Must we care for what happens elsewhere and not for what happens close within ourselves? We must wonder why the Palestinian cause is not placed in the general context of this issue rather than solely within the framework of fighting the disease, as occupation is no more a problem for the Palestinians or Israelis alone, but a problem for the world. It is a headache just like the virus and the time has come for it to end, for medical reasons at least, if not for other essential political reasons—namely fundamental human rights. We are facing a prolonged and continuous colonial occupation in addition to the coronavirus, mixed with the racist policies of occupation, which does not see or perceive Palestinians as humans, who may fall sick. This has become intolerable and unacceptable under any circumstances. Siege, colonisation, land appropriation, the "Deal of the Century," small mindedness—and all Palestinians seek is basic justice.

In Palestine, the situation that proceeded the coronavirus was not normal. Nor is any hope to restore it. This pandemic has possibly overshadowed the ways we perceive political and cultural conditions. Listening to the news, the notion of common humanity underscores this moment of palpable danger; it is attached to our contemplation of many things and urges a reconsideration of the status of the individual as they are threatened with anxiety and tension.

Will we in Palestine soon come back to the concerns of our daily lives? Will this space continue to be one where conflict remains between who is human and who is deemed otherwise? Did we, the inhabitants of this part of the world, need the bloody stupidity of occupation to be topped with daily curfews, the kind with which we are well accustomed and toward which we are particularly fed up? Of course not. Before and after the pandemic, we need to lift the curfew off the whole world, lift it from occupied Palestine. That is how it will be possible to perceive this pandemic as an opportunity, one not based on the ethos of 'placing your head amongst the others on the chopping block', but rather to 'stop all beheadings'.

The post-modernity of coronavirus

A form of conflict that ruled, and still rules the world, is the struggle over power and the maintenance of economic and political dependency. This North-South unbalanced relationship is demonstrated, for example, in the arms race (and the actual use of arms) and in attempts to control human genetics and scientific progress that in many ways permit a tightening control over policies 'here' and 'there' in favour of the winner.

Some people have paid a heavier price than others in the endless and unprecedented sectarian and factional rifts that have emerged since World War II. Resulting in displacement, occupation and destruction of whole cities, these brutal conflicts over energy and markets have been fuelled by infinite greed and represent the most heinous, brutal and unjust forms of thought and conduct. Those conflicts even invoked deranged and dark chapters of history, renewing the idea of selling humans and butchering them—as was the case, for example, in what ISIS did in the name of religion. I say this because we must not expect any good to come from the political systems that rule the world—neither in medicine, nor in prevention, nor in avoiding diseases nor inventing them. This crisis must create new economic, political and even social modes.

Revolting against stone

We must not forget that the coronavirus invaded many parts of the world while people were taking to the streets in protests and demonstrations that demanded change and improving the conditions: for example, the gilets jaunes protests in France and protests against corruption in Lebanon, Iraq and other countries. During the corona crisis, civil rights protests erupted in the United States demanding justice under the slogan "Black Lives Matter," when the virus had not yet disappeared.

What do we expect after the coronavirus crisis? What options are open to us? Will states become more tyrannical and brutal, or more moral and just, attempting to reconstruct society radically and under conditions that are more humane? We must never lose hope, as the poets say. However, before and after that, when will humanity recover from this disease? What will differentiate oppressed societies that live under colonial occupation, as indeed is the case here in Palestine, before and after the virus? Is it their only hope?

Furthermore, it seems that it may no more be possible to resolve the crises resulting

from the pandemic at national levels alone, but rather, a new, more humane and just global policy has become necessary. The repercussions of the pandemic do not recognise borders and the solutions can no longer be local. Will humankind learn what enhances the spirit of solidarity or will it produce a new, and crueller, system?

This deeply interwoven world will not make it without a different political vision and radical changes to the forces that control it; a vision that promotes the values of international cooperation to confront crises. This world cannot afford to fail, nor can it afford new wars. The developments have proved the failure of the existing international system, its injustice and the resulting catastrophic conflicts that endangered most human achievements.

I started my article quoting Albert Einstein because of the several forms of danger underlying the coming war between the world superpowers, especially China and the United States that—God forbid—does not escalate to nuclear confrontation. Nor will it be similar to the Cold War between the former Soviet Union and the West after World War II. Nevertheless, it is a severe war over the economy and all means of communications, including, for example, 5G technology. This is say that this is a virus war and a proxy military war. Those are on-going wars that use small states as tools and battlefronts in which people and communities pay the price.

The coronavirus pandemic has been used in this battle in a political sense, deepening the crisis and possibly leading this confrontation to a harsh zone that may take humanity back to a new stone age, to a war with no victor, a war in which we all lose.

Ramallah, Palestine, 2020

Khaled Hourani was born in Hebron in 1965. He was the Artistic Director of the International Academy of Art – Palestine (2007-10), which he later headed (2010-13). He was also the Director General of the Fine Arts Department at the Palestinian Ministry of Culture (2004-6). Hourani has participated in many local and international exhibitions and has organised and curated several others. He participated in a number of cultural and artistic workshops and seminars locally and internationally, the last of which was the Abu Dhabi Art Summit in 2019.

Corona Got Us

Matt Aufderhorst

Corona got us. Totally under control, fed up, suspicious? More inspired, connected, motivat

ed? More paranoid, selfish, stingy? More courageous, compassionate, generous,liberated?

How can one write about the Corona crisis without losing sight of the idea of love and community?

What words can we find without raising the alarm? Or using the same note over and over again, like a news bulletin? Or appear too reckless? Or too melancholy?

How does the virus change our body image?

How does it affect the awareness we have of ourselves and others? Our conversations?

How does Corona alter our relationships with our friends, families and those we meet by chance?

How robustly are culture, the market economy, capitalism and the health system facing this challenge?

Matt Aufderhorst addresses these questions in the essay “Corona Got Us, or On Life and Love in Times of Pestilence.” His language is poetic and sensitive, profound and, yes, now and then, even amusing. Perhaps most surprising is how much each of us might find ourselves portrayed in this thoughtful text.

—Priya Basil

From Outside

1. Every disease knows and creates winners. Common sense is rarely one of them.
2. Let us remain calm in Times of Pestilence. The hours are loud enough. Especially when life takes a deep breath—and stops temporarily.
3. Panic was, is and will remain part of every epidemic. Whoever takes a cautious step back has already taken the first step towards reason. Whoever takes a careless step forward, on the other hand, is first encircled by heedless others, then overrun and trampled upon or carried onwards with them towards the chasm.
4. Precaution is a good idea in Times of Pestilence; figure out the space ahead of you. Forbearance is an even better one; know the space in which you linger. But the best advice is circumspection; respect the space, yours and that of others.
5. To bury oneself silently in Times of Pestilence harms not only us, but also our friends. Not to mention family. Reason always breathes through friendly conversation. If you wall yourself in, air and water will inevitably become scarce in the long run. Even if there are still enough resources to go around, at least at the beginning.
6. To share fairly is not an aesthetic but a moral question in Times of Pestilence.
7. The exemplary, flawless art of living is a myth at least in any lasting sense, hermitages notwithstanding. Even Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*[1] was, truth be told, around the corner from a small town, almost within shouting distance. If we are advised to retreat, it is worth asking why and what the advisors intend with their proposal.
8. In the case of an infectious disease, however, it is advisable, following medical expertise, to voluntarily withdraw—and to do so consistently and without exceptions. It is not appropriate to deliberately leave others in the dark about a possible risk of infection. In such a case, it helps to remember Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative: *Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law*. This moral guidance is general, since it holds all people accountable under all conditions. Simply, one could say: I do not inflict anything on others that I do not want to experience myself.
9. If quarantine is ordered, in case of a contagious illness, we need not rebel. Only—let's be, in the first instance, polite: it is the height of rudeness to assume that because you are healthy you pose no risk to others.
10. If we are proven to be healthy and, thanks to a gross miscalculation, we are the only ones to be quarantined, while everyone else keeps their freedom of movement, we would naturally prefer to escape it, physically and intellectually. False solidarity is of no use to us or to society. Especially not when we can actively participate elsewhere. In this case, our escape is not an end in itself, but teleological.
11. An active, engaged life is generally advisable. If a human being is isolated, the fuse of existence is shortened.
12. Help is given to the visible. In Times of Pestilence, the invisible must be made visible by those who are already visible.
13. Standing apart has more serious consequences in Times of Pestilence than in less dramatic times.
14. Those who look away will eventually be overlooked themselves.
15. In Times of Pestilence, the concept of "family" changes. It expands, becomes more flexible, following from time to time the low, then high tide. If we are lucky, the set theory between "humanity" and "family" is redefined. The overlaps increase. If it runs perfectly, "humanity" and "family" will end in one and the same circle.
16. Almost everything that can be said about the formation of character in Times of Pestilence can be found in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*[2] . If we read it, we might realise that a disease in itself does not change anyone. It only teases out what is there anyway, for better or for worse.
17. In Times of Pestilence it is especially advisable to look for wisdom with the help of what the ancient Greeks called *ataraxia*—a robust state of equanimity. Serenity of the soul is a conscious decision that we can make autonomously, just—no surprise here—like restlessness of the soul. Those who drift are exposed to the latter; those who head for a safe haven find the former.
18. The most transitory thing is transience. Crises come and go. Those who consider their own course of time to be special are especially mistaken.
19. In the necessary and feasible reduction of claims lies the most basic insight we can have in Times of Pestilence: knowing that less is reliably enough helps us to

be sceptical about the future of *once-again-more-and-more-and-more*.

20. Those who do not want to learn, learn nothing, even in Times of Pestilence.

21. Those who do not want to feel anything, feel nothing, even in Times of Pestilence.

22. Experts make a living by having different opinions, besides the fact that science develops by proving or falsifying contrasting conjectures. Only in retrospect is it reliably proven that nobody owns the truth. Verity is part of the common weal. We are—let's be honest—all responsible for the common good of truth. The particularity of truth is reserved for art.

23. What about the lie? We don't have to worry about that. The lie thrives in Days of Plague. We can generally say that the lie can always be relied upon to take care of itself. Its survival instincts are perfectly honed. Our support is welcome, but it does not need us to endure. When it comes down to it, the lie even renounces our help without batting an eyelid. Yes, it betrays us in cold blood as soon as we—the lie and us—no longer pull together.

24. Whoever befriends a lie in Times of Pestilence must be prepared for a disappointment, a simultaneously understandable and incomprehensible one.

25. Friendships newly made or more firmly bound during Times of Pestilence show a robustness and reveal a persistence which many other seemingly self-evident friendships often lack. Fair-weather alliances falter frequently in Times of Pestilence. We only know what we have in each other when we need something from each other. Genuine help was, is and will remain, in the end, mutual.

26. On whom we can rely while the signs of a grave epidemic are still occurring is intrinsically apparent. And empty promises are recognised as such, too. If whatever help the authorities send does not come quickly, it will be too late.

27. Every falsehood multiplies in Times of Pestilence. Which, unfortunately, does not apply to truth. Why is this so? Truth usually has the quality of concentration. If it focuses on a problem, gets bogged down in details, it may let other tasks slip through its fingers. Which means that in Times of Pestilence we should be—or at least, *might be*—less hard on verity. It tries its best, while falsehood not only amicably holds on to the worst in Times of Pestilence, but also devotes itself to it with tooth and nail, skin and hair, eyes and mouth, noses and ears, hands and feet, forks and knives, as well, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.

28. Trust in one's own abilities, one's own goodness, and, let's be precise, let's not beat around the bush, trust in the ability to be noble and consistently compassionate is even more difficult than usual in Times of Pestilence. After all, we know very well that we have missed the starting point over and over again, that we have inexplicably hesitated with truly engaging with life and that we have devoted ourselves to the invalid, the cheap and drossy without hesitation and, shame on us, without reasonable calculation. To suddenly do exactly what is necessary, what others and the better self expect from us, is impossible. Nevertheless, despondency is unnecessary. In Times of Pestilence, every small step that leads to goodness counts. Should others make giant leaps that lead to the goal (or at least sound good), let them show off and let them do so without reservation. Let's be generous with the altruistic achievement of others, even if they are performed in front of public mirrors.

29. There are many ways to the goal in Times of Pestilence. And, often, there are also many goals.

30. Most judgments turn out to be prejudices—and thus a disadvantage for the good of the community.

31. Death does not come on quietly in Times of Pestilence. If we hear it from a distance, it is worthwhile trying to escape.

32. The better we have studied the strategy of our enemies, the better we can keep them in check. Sun Tzu says in *The Art of War*[3]: "If you know yourself and the enemy, you need not fear the outcome of a hundred battles." It remains to be added that Sun Tzu, who himself walked over bloody battlefields, considers a victory without a fight to be the most desirable.

33. The greatest enemies live within myself. All others have less power over me. That is as much the case in times of peace as in crisis.

34. To be good alone is a desirable start. But if you do not share the good with others, you will not benefit from your own goodness, even in the short term.

35. Hedonists underestimate how easy their intentions are to see through.

36. Tiredness is normal. Especially in Times of Pestilence, one should pay attention to finding continuous rest. Those who rush about are more susceptible to the rush of disaster.

37. Those who allow themselves peace and quiet are better able to withstand both

present and future noise. For the sake of safety and compassion alone, it is advisable to have always an open ear.

38. Especially in Times of Pestilence, one should distinguish exactly where help comes from and not let oneself be led in good faith onto the slippery slope of false commitments. Seneca the Younger[4] explains that one is not generous when being lavish with others' goods, but when taking from oneself what one gives to others.

39. Every illness dwells in us as a matter of principle; none is alien to us; the closest and intimate bond one has is the bond to an existential illness, for here questions of life and death are at stake. Anyone who says that an illness is a foreign matter has already halfway lost against it. Please do not, under any circumstances, confuse this insight with acceptance, because of course it is worthwhile to resist the malaise that always dwells in the self.

40. In Times of Pestilence, business does not stop. Even if the shops seem to be closed, by order and law. Rather the opposite. Money finds loopholes and takes on new forms that few would have thought possible. In Times of Pestilence, the war profiteers tear the masks of harmlessness from their faces, under which sheer greed dwells, which is why sceptical consideration is absolutely advisable. If I am decent, that may be all well and good, but the other person does not have to and, probably, won't follow suit; at least not immediately.

41. In Times of Pestilence, the fickle ones have more power than they are entitled to. They find attentive ears because they are louder than many of the solid ones.

42. If, in Times of Pestilence, we hold on to the steady ones, the roped party gains strength. But if you rely on the vagrant ones, you are in danger of falling.

43. Every promise should come with a pledge in Times of Pestilence. The more interesting this pledge is, the better. However, there is no guarantee that it, or anything at all, will be repaid.

44. Guarantees count in the Times of Pestilence, if they are enforceable on the one hand and reciprocal on the other—which makes them more resilient.

45. Whoever puts his or her skin on the market in Times of Pestilence should not be surprised if the public takes this as an unspoken permission to stare without being asked. Morality knows few things better than the course of time.

46. Too much caution and distance between friends does harm in Times of Pestilence. What does this mean for closeness? Does it strengthen or weaken intimacy? As a rule, only the individual case can answer.

47. To laze about when one can serve the common good is not appropriate in Times of Pestilence. One should rather follow the Protestant work ethic or the utilitarian call of Marcus Aurelius: "Work! But not like an unhappy person or like one who wants to be admired or pitied. Work or rest as is best for the community."

48. Resources are limited, especially in Times of Pestilence. The boundlessness of one's own needs is not appropriate for this reason alone. Those who still cannot suppress their own greed will sooner or later feel the anger of society. Only the most cunning can talk their way out of it without suffering harm. A shabby and reckless art occasionally pulled off with panache, but one that deserves no admiration whatsoever.

49. Those who want to get into debt find ample opportunity to do so in the Times of Pestilence. Whether careless spending is worthwhile is another matter.

50. In Times of Pestilence, only love helps. And if, for whatever reason, it is not in stock, goodness, compassion and indulgence are advisable.

Matt Aufderhorst studied art history and German literature in Kiel and Hamburg. He has worked as a reporter for radio and television and has written architecture, film and theatre reviews. Aufderhorst spent several years, in his mid-20s, in a smoky underground club playing racy songs. His essays about architecture, philosophy and remembrance have appeared in Lettre International and Brick. Aufderhorst lives in Berlin and is co-founder of Authors for Peace, a platform from which authors can actively use literature to promote peace.

Endnotes

1 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (London: Penguin Classics, 2016).

2 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

3 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Hoboken, NJ: Capstone, 2010), III. Attack by Stratagem, section 18: "Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

4 Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia*, I, XX, 3: "Nam quemadmodum non est magni animi, qui de alieno liberalis est, sed ille, qui, quod alteri donat, sibi detrahit." https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/sen/sen.clem.shtml.

DAAR (دار)
A Home Between the Public and the Private

Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti

In the summer of 2007 in Palestine, 13 years before we were all locked down because of COVID-19, we established DAAR (Decolonising Architecture Art Residency)[1], an architectural and artist practice whose name in Arabic (دار) means "home." One of DAAR's primary objectives has been to research and challenge dominant notions of private and public spaces. Focussing on the relation between the private space of the house as a site of care and the public space as a site of governance, DAAR has created different collective spaces at the threshold between them.

More than ever, during the pandemic, the role of the home and its relation to the public has radically changed. It has marked a point in time that forces the world population to rethink the home and its role in society. In what follows, we will draw on our experiences of working as DAAR at the thresholds between art, architecture and pedagogy.

When Yazid Anani invited us to reflect on the coronavirus crisis for this publication, we asked ourselves: Is this yet another crisis? What exactly is this new condition we are facing? We took the conversation with Yazid as a starting point and we began writing this article by transcribing our conversation. We thought together on how the present condition has radically changed the idea of home. Although life seemed to slow down during the lockdown, things were changing rapidly. Indeed, reading the transcribed text with Yazid just a few weeks later, it felt that our conversation's ground completely shifted.

Therefore, instead of trying to give a snapshot of a reality in rapid transformation, we decided to anchor our reflections to our experience with DAAR and focus on a specific question that emerged from the conversation with Yazid: How has the relation between the public and the private changed in this historical moment? Indeed, Yazid, in part of our conversation, pointed out:

> *One should not also discard confinement as a process of isolation from the public space and a drastic shift in its definition. The public space becomes, in a state of emergency, only to ensure one's survival and subsistence through buying or going to work for those who ensure the safety of the public. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a different notion to the public space that needs investigation, especially pertaining to the colonial project where the physical space is a very imperative ingredient for domination, control and eventually resistance. This is another important aspect that one can also study between the immersive online experiencec and the intimacies of private space and the offline with the transformation and shift in the meaning of public space and the physical aspect of its geography*.

Indeed, in a moment of crisis, we also see different emerging forms of collective spaces not captured in the public and private spheres. During the first Intifada, homes were transformed into spaces for self-organised learning environments, replacing universities and schools, and living rooms were transformed into underground political organisations. We could ask today, in a time where assembling in public spaces is banned, could spaces in the home host the emergence of collective spaces for political action? The home can be reimagined to play a central role in the formation of new civic spaces, at a time when gatherings in homes have become extremely difficult under the "state of exception" stipulations generated by fears of infection and restrictions on the movement of people.

More fundamentally, we could also ask where home is. During this time, this question was forced upon everyone—not just those who are displaced, not only migrants and refugees, but many people who were previously distracted by a busy public life building a career, and personal life in which home was only a place to sleep at the end of the day. The time of travelling to the other side of the world for a few days is gone, the time of living between one city and another is gone. The restriction of movement due to the pandemic forced everyone—temporarily, at least—to be stuck in one place and engage with it.

Our practice, DAAR, has always taken home as a main point of departure, attempting to understand how to analyse and transform the public space from an intimate dimension of domesticity. How to depart from the living room to understand collectivity? What can we learn about creativity and management from the kitchen? These are questions that we have attempted to answer through our work with DAAR.

On the occasion of the publication of the book *Permanent Temporariness*, we reflected on how the house was mobilised as a site of action in our practice with Eyal Weizman, co-founder of DAAR.

> *The following conversation is an extract from the book* Permanent Temporariness, *Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti (Stockholm: Art and Theory, 2019).*

Eyal Weizman: I find it exceptional and of great value when a project or a practice is able to serve as a reflection of its time. The situation in Palestine may seem like it's static and hopeless, but if you look at your work and the work of DAAR (Decolonising Architecture Art Research) carefully, you can see that there are various moments we have gone through that demonstrate how much things have changed. *The Road Map*[2] is basically a story about the second Intifada, and the situation in Palestine is not like that now. We started working together at this time of huge violence, which is not the same type of violence that we live in now, one that has become more structural and bureaucratic. When we started, it was dangerous to drive through the West Bank. You would be shot at, either by the Israeli army or a Palestinian resistance group. There were gun battles day and night. Within all of this, and the shock of the collapse of the peace process, Alessandro, your book, *Archipelaghi e Enclave*,[3] and my book, *Hollow Land*,[4] were both works in between journalism and architecture trying to understand and analyse the situation of conflict. In 2007, when we started DAAR, the same year both of our books were published, it was still dangerous to

travel through the West Bank, so the people who came were taking a great risk and would stay with us longer. So, the residency was a little bit like a refuge, a place to be together against all odds. I still remember how worried Sandi was when I would get a call from my sister and I would speak Hebrew because the sense of danger was always there. During the second Intifada, the international presence in the West Bank changed. International activism started and the residency tapped into these energies.

Alessandro Petti: I remember the reactions of the people who visited us in Beit Sahour at the time, how they were so surprised to find such a culturally active environment despite the surrounding violence. Ann Stoler[5] wrote a very generous text that described a house filled with people from all over the world working on projects that embraced a notion of critique that aligns with Foucault's definition: not to be governed, not by these people, not at this time and not in this way. What I feel is crucial in a collective practice is the ability to create a space and possibility of encounters that do not exist elsewhere in the present. The residency in our house created a world in which a life in common became possible and a place where people knew that they would find a unique space. Okwui Enwezor[6] recognised that, as a sort of side effect of our practice, we created a civic space that constructed a reality, rather than simply being based on the analysis, documentation and denouncement of a colonial regime. Looking back, I am moved by the generosity of all the people who decided to come and contribute to DAAR. They came and entered into a relation of reciprocity. I guess what attracted people was the possibility of being instantly plugged into an extremely charged situation, while at the same time being provided with effective conceptual and practical tools to challenge the status quo. DAAR offered a conceptual framework and a way to see the reality of the time and in exchange, the residents offered their professionality, time, commitment and experiences. In a hostile condition like the one in occupied Palestine, where everything is about destruction, the residency offered grounded visions.

Sandi Hilal: Since we moved to Europe in the fall of 2017, it has become ever more evident how crucial the creation of public spaces is and how we need to address the question of who has the right to use them and who owns them. Since the first projects we did on the decolonisation of settlements in the West Bank, we understood that we were not just dealing with colonial settlements, but with the expropriation of Palestinian public space. The Israeli settlements in the West Bank were built for the most part on the remains of Palestinian collective land. The question of decolonization therefore became how to decolonise Palestinian public space. What would a Palestinian public space look like, particularly in the absence of the state? Similar questions were posed later on regarding Palestinian refugee camps. What is the notion of public space in Palestinian refugee camps? Is it even a legitimate question in a place that should never have existed in the first place? What is the political meaning of thinking about public space in Palestinian refugee camps and how is this connected to the Palestinian right of return? In our *P'sagot* project,[7] we concluded that return can be possible only if we are able to imagine how a collective return might take place. This made us realise the centrality of "*the common/Al Masha*"[8] not only in the reality of refugee camps, but also as an essential pillar for the right of return. These realisations led to the recognition that the residency in our home, DAAR, is essentially the creation of a collective space between the public and the private. This creation of a quasi-institution in our own private space was a response to the lack of public space in Palestine.

Eyal Weizman: I think there is a triangle of projects: there is the house residency as a form of civic space and the two sites of action that somehow mirror each other: the Israeli settlement and the Palestinian refugee camp, both of which are extraterritorial and define common space in a different way. These two are, in a sense, mutually constitutive: the settlement as a place from which you are banned, an island that you cannot enter, an exclusive public that needs to be decolonised and the refugee camp as a site for the commons. I still want to insist that DAAR's projects are rooted in a history; it was a sort of transitional period between one form of violence and another. At the same time, it prefigured history. It was ahead of its time on the map of other institutions. I think what helped it become what it was is a particular, fundamental characteristic of architecture that does not exist in art or other kinds of residencies. Architecture requires collective work. It's not like each person can come and do their own individual project. This is the reason why there are no architecture residencies. A residency is a place where you go to cut yourself off from your habitat and work on your own thing. DAAR was a residency existing in a situation, it was a space of immersion, rather than removing you from the world. It rooted you in a civic space that was larger than the office. It is a model of a shared world that art does not allow.

Alessandro Petti: I believe that the architectural residency worked based on the notion of friendship. The residents of DAAR built strong relationships that continued beyond the period of the residency. I find this kind of intensity very hard

to replicate nowadays, especially in more institutional settings. Palestine, with its kind of radicalism, creates very intense, emotional moments of friendship.

Eyal Weizman: I think it is quite interesting that DAAR also coincided with our life projects, our children. It is very interesting for me today to see how Sama and Tala developed, because they grew up in a very special environment. On the one hand, it was very enclosed, almost claustrophobic, in the sense that it is very hard to move around, but on the other hand, the residency provided them with incredible exposure to so many different people. They were always around, they were always exposed to all these languages of different people coming from all over. So now they speak four or five different languages with an incredible level of adaptation and ease. The way you opened your life, the breakfasts you had in the morning, the dinners in the evenings.... In the way that Alessandro is speaking about it in terms of friendship, we can also speak about it in terms of family, the way the residency entered into and affected it. You can say, well, this resident married that resident, but Sama and Tala are also a product of that form of life that you decided to have.

Sandi Hilal: And not only them. I think one of the major issues we had when we got married, especially for Alessandro, was how to avoid becoming a petit bourgeois family. He was really worried about this, all the time saying, "I don't want to live just the four of us, this is not the form of life I want to have." So, the residency was a form of escape from certain ways of being within a family. It was a similar strategy of profanation to when we decided to baptise Sama and Tala in the camp. This was the moment that I felt the refugees we had been working with really opened up to us. It was a gesture that said: we can share the most intimate things of our life with the camp. We were both open to sharing our family, not in the sense of a kibbutz or communitarian experiment, but simply that we could both say that we have no problems with sharing our life with others. Maybe Sama and Tala understood, instinctively, that we have what I call a public family, not a private one. The residency was also part of the desire to get out of the isolation of a nuclear family.

Eyal Weizman: The residency became entangled with the space of your extended family, too.

Sandi Hilal: And now that we've moved to Sweden, we ask ourselves what it means to have a public family, to have one there. This dimension is what I miss most about Palestine.

Eyal Weizman: Because of the house? The residency in your house in Palestine was based around the kitchen and the living room as spaces for discussion. It was a way for the residents not only to talk about projects, but to live in them. It was always the family house, which was extended to encompass, to become something else, which really means that it was about finding and living an intimacy within it. It is also interesting to see different moments in its transformation. The years leading up to 2010, more or less, were years of struggle. They were years of violence and precarity but there was also an idea of a political project that could grow out of this violent struggle. There was a revolutionary energy. In these types of situations, you say, okay, this is it, we're living with immense violence, but there is something there that makes the future seem near. When you're in the midst of the struggle, you believe that it will shift at some point. In the second decade of this millennium, the future has only moved further and further away. I think that is also an indication of the shift in DAAR's practice from the settlement to the camp. The camp is also a laboratory for a longer struggle; the camp works at a different duration. But I think that shift in your practice was for different reasons. One of them was the job Sandi got at UNRWA. It was a combination of conceptual choices and professional choices, but it was also a shift in the register of struggle; it became clear that this kind of armed resistance and radical struggle is not operating the way it should be, but that instead it was happening in between for a much longer duration.

Sandi Hilal: I believe that the shift in the camp happened with the collapse of the idea of building a state. And not only in Palestine, but in the whole Arab world. When we were working on the settlements, the idea of building a state was very present. We were confined to this idea. I still remember once when we were in Venice and I told you, "Yes, why not the wall? I want to have an independent place, let's build the wall if this separates Israel from Palestine."

Eyal Weizman: One state, two states...

Sandi Hilal: Yeah, one state, two states. We were still thinking what a Palestinian state might look like and how we can shift and intervene in these settlements. But then we began to understand that the only way we can get out of the political situation that Palestine was in was to start working in extraterritorial spaces like refugee camps. In *A Common Assembly*,[9] and even *P'sagot*, we shifted our perspective; what interested us was not that the parliament[10] was where it was, but rather that it allowed us to work in the cracks. We saw that it is only from the position of refugees that we can challenge the status quo.

Eyal Weizman: That's absolutely true. And I think this is, in a sense, why the future retreated all of a sudden. It's also why I think your subsequent move was Campus in Camps, which is an infrastructure project not only for the near future, but for the distant future. The sequence of projects you described are like when you draw a circle, each one has a hitching point and as you go further from the hitch, you take the centre and you draw. I thought it was a very interesting sequence of projects; the periphery of each became the place where the needle entered for the next one. But you battled against this situation of a receding future and against the intellectual and architectural challenges of dealing with that. There is always an immediacy in your built architecture, in *Shu'fat*, *Fawwar*, or *The Concrete Tent*, but the future that you speculate on is a long-term one.

Alessandro Petti: I don't see it the same way. I think what we did—which was more radical and at the same time more pragmatic—was to create situations in the present that allowed for a different form of cohabitation without having the illusion that things would radically change in the near future. The year that marks this for me was 2011. It was the first time I had the feeling that the kind of condition, what you called the future, which we were working on, became closer. It was a rare moment, when you feel that finally, history is not so hostile against the way you live. Discourse on the common became central and suddenly all of the ideas that we had been working on in the camps, and the collapse of the project of building a state, became relevant for everyone. A second shift was the summer of 2014, with the so-called 'refugee crisis,' when the condition of refugeeness became central to public debate in Europe and was understood as a threat to nation-states, to its fictional social homogeneity. These changes brought our work over the last 10 years in Palestine to the forefront of the struggle. Decolonisation moved from the occupied territories to the colonial metropolis. I'm against this discourse about the future because we've found a much more effective way to think political transformation than messianic Marxism. We understood decolonisation as an endless struggle, one that is happening right now, right here. There are already fragments of futures in the present. You imagine something and at the same time live it. It is liberating to understand political transformation without being trapped in the idea that one day everything will be solved and we will all live happily. The work that we have been doing in refugee camps is already the future; it is already something that deals with people that live outside the nation-state. Working within and against the condition of permanent temporariness means opposing two fronts at the same time: the perpetuation of the status quo that imposes an unbearable condition of precarity on people, and normalisation, trying to put all the broken pieces of the nation-state back into its box. When the work shifts from speculation to realisation, it shows that a third way is actually possible. And more importantly, we also start seeing how different struggles are connected to each other and not imprisoned in their self-referential logic along with the global success of BDS; we are witnessing Palestine becoming a laboratory of resistance and not only against Israeli violence.

By reflecting on our practice, it became very clear that in a moment of oppression and emergency the house has become a site from where to struggle for freedom.

Two of our architectural and artistic interventions might more concretely show how the space of the house could be transformed in a collective space for social and political action.

IMAGE OF THE SQUARE IN FAWAAR

In 2006, Sandi was appointed as head of a research unit of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the West Bank to work in Fawwar refugee camp in Palestine. She led research and a participatory design platform, which lasted for more than eight years (2006–14). One of the most fundamental interventions of this platform was the creation of collective spaces within the camp. A critical challenge that arose was precisely the definition of 'public' and 'private' within a camp. What is defined as private is not really private because the homes cannot be registered as private property, and what is defined as public is not really public because neither the host government nor the residents recognise it as such. If there is no public authority, then who would be responsible for the maintenance of collective spaces? What kind of spatial configuration would be required for the space to be self-managed? Who would decide how it can be used and who can use it? In addition, in a conservative environment, would women be allowed to gather in this space?

In participatory meetings during the design process, Sandi asked the women in the neighbourhood if they would ever gather to drink coffee or tea in the square. One of the women answered forcefully, but with humour: "It would be a shame for a woman to leave her home without a proper reason. What woman would leave her home and her kids for coffee and tea outside? We already cannot deal with our husbands; never mind us going out and having tea and coffee in the plaza!"

A few months later, as the discussion geared towards how this space might look, the

community decided that the plaza would be enclosed by walls. Many of them were convinced that the plaza would not work without doors, locks and a guard. The neighbours were emphatic in that they did not want their house facades to be part of the plaza as they felt they would lose privacy and that, by enclosing the space, whoever wanted to be inside it had to deliberately enter and, therefore, would feel more responsibility in respecting and taking care of it.

Abu Ata, one of the neighbours, explained: "The enclosure of the plaza was a very important step, I think, and absolutely essential. Imagine if kids were to kick a ball through a neighbour's windows."

And there it was, a square enclosed by four walls. Suddenly, I was reminded of that very first moment in the history of the camp when refugees replaced the tents with a roofless house. It was a good compromise: the plaza was open and always accessible but enclosed and not entirely public nor private. No locked doors, no guards, but the walls turned the square into a roofless living room, which quickly became an ideal place for weddings, funerals and gatherings for women. The sceptics soon began to understand the purpose of the space.[11]

IMAGE OF THE LIVING ROOM IN BODEN

Miles away, in Boden in the north of Sweden, newly arrived refugees from Syria are struggling to understand how to live in a completely new environment. In 2017, Sandi was commissioned from the public art agency in Sweden to make an intervention for marginalised communities in Boden, a city that became one of the main places to host refugees in Sweden during the 'crisis of refugees in Europe'. Refugees in Boden that Sandi met told her they realised Sweden was not what they had dreamed. They found themselves in this remote, dark place, 30° Celsius below zero and completely alone. A state of passivity would set in as if they had lost their political agency, an agency that had been so strong before. Projecting themselves elsewhere, they would blame the city and convince themselves that Boden was not their final destination. Sandi was desperately looking for somebody who was planning to stay in Boden. If everyone was looking forward to leaving Boden, then who are the 'new citizens' of this city? To her surprise, she found Yasmeen Mahmoud and Ibrahim Muhammad Haj Abdulla. She visited their house for the first time with Joanna Zawieja and Marti Manen, curators from the Public Art Agency in Sweden. The two young Syrian refugees greeted them with incredible warmth and hospitality. It felt almost surreal. Yasmeen and Ibrahim had made themselves the hosts. They were hosting representatives of the Swedish state in their tiny living room, refusing to accept their assigned role as eternal guests.

The encounter with Yasmeen and Ibrahim marked the beginning of the first living room project.[12] With Yasmeen and Ibrahim as hosts, the municipal housing company BodenBo offered a ground floor apartment in the Yellow House, an architectural complex for refugees, to create a permanent collective living room where other refugees could exercise their right to host and not only to be a guest. The challenge was to give a public dimension to the private sphere.

The living room is where the private home opens itself to the guest, the foreigner, the outsider. It functions as a transitional space and a passage between the domestic and the public. In Arab culture, the living room is a space always ready to host unexpected guests; it is the most ornamented part of the house, never in disorder, and often has fruit, nuts and black coffee ready to be offered at all times. It might be the space that is the least used but is still the one that is most symbolic, curated and cared for. Boden is largely viewed by its refugee community as a transitory place. Yasmeen and her family, however, want to stay. In claiming the right to host and welcome diverse people into their home—and now in the Yellow House—the living room allows them to combine their lost life in Syria with their new life in Sweden.

Since the first madafeh/living room opened in Boden, we have opened other living rooms at the Vanabbe Museum to make rejected asylum seekers more visible and their stories heard. These temporary rooms have become art exhibitions in Europe and Palestine.

By leaving Palestine, we were afraid of losing our home, our power of hosting in the way we practiced at DAAR. What encouraged us the most was the ability to reflect and understand our life and practice in that far-away place in the north of Sweden. We realised that during our many years of practice in Palestine, we developed a practice to transform a private space of the house into a collective and shared space. Many people exercise the right to host without realising the power it carries.

At the time of writing, the pandemic is far from over; what seems clear at this moment is that new civic spaces need to be rebuilt from the careful and feminine space of the home rather than from the dominant, patriarchal and homogenising modernist public space. The task ahead of us is to posit how to create and reframe those spaces at a time of restrictions imposed on movement and lockdown policies.

Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti have developed a research and project-based artistic practice that is both theoretically ambitious and practically engaged in the struggle for justice and equality. They founded Campus in Camps, an experimental educational programme hosted in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem with the aims to overcome conventional educational structures by creating a space for critical and grounded knowledge production connected to greater transformations and the democratisation of society. In 2007 they founded Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (www.decolonizing.ps) with Eyal Weizman in Beit Sahour, Palestine, to combine an architectural studio and art residency to bring together architects, artists, activists, urbanists, filmmakers and curators to work collectively on projects that focus on politics and architecture. Their latest publication Permanent Temporariness is a book, catalogue and archive accounting for 15 years of research and experimentation and creation marked by an inner tension and visionary drive that rethinks itself through collective engagement. Permanent Temporariness was published in connection with their eponymous retrospective exhibition that was inaugurated at the New York University Abu Dhabi art gallery, 2018, and at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, 2019.

Endnotes

1 www.decolonizing.ps

2 The Road Map is art an work produced by multiplicity in 2003 on the different porosity of territories based on national identity and regime of movements governed by passports.

3 Arcipelaghi e Enclave, is a book written by Alessandro Petti on the spatial model emerging as system of control. (Bruno Mondadori 2007)

4 Hollow Land, is a book written by Eyal Weizman on the Architecture of occupation in Palestine. (Verso 2007)

5 Ann Laura Stoler is Willy Brandt Distinguished University Professor of Anthropology and Historical Studies at The New School for Social Research. She has worked for some thirty years on the politics of knowledge, colonial governance, racial epistemologies, the sexual politics of empire, and ethnography of the archives.

6 Nigerian-born poet, art critic, art historian, who confronted the European art canon

7 The project speculate on the reuse and subversion of the Israeli settlements after their evacuation.

8 The Common/Al masha is different from "the public." The state apparatus mediates the existence of the public, whereas the common/al masha exists beyond state institutions. The public is a space that is given to people by structures of power, whereas the common/al masha is a space created by the inter- action of people. Public space can exist without people. The Common/Al masha only exists if people are constantly producing it.

9 An art installation that reuse the Palestinian parlament for a Common Assembly, an extraterritorial zone capable of representing all Palestinians: those living in Israel, under its occupation, and in exile.

10 The Palestinian Legislative Council building—known as the Palestinian Parliament— is simultaneously a construction site and a ruin.

11 "Abu Ata, Architect: a play in four acts" by Sandi Hilal , in "Architecture is All Over" ed. Marrikka Trotter and Esther Choi, (2016)

12 http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/boden/

From Dystopia to Utopia: Imagining a Radical Future

Dr. Yara Hawari

The COVID-19 pandemic and the dystopic reality the world has found itself in has been dubbed by many as the great equaliser—a virus that knows no colour, creed or class. Yet the statistics demonstrate clearly that this is not true. In the US, Black and Latino communities are dying at a disproportionate rate and similarly, in the UK, the NHS warned that Black, Asian and those with minority ethnic backgrounds are likely to be more affected[1]. Quite clearly, the virus is shining a spotlight on power structures and systems in society that privilege some lives over others. Furthermore, as Naomi Klein aptly reminds us in her book *Shock Doctrine,* crises like this are often exploited by corporations and banks in what Klein calls "disaster capitalism."[2] Governments around the world are prioritising the private and banking sectors over the public sector, working-class people and ethnic minorities. Similarly, companies and corporations are desperately trying to profit from the pandemic, from high-end designer face masks to the latest quarantine 'must haves'.

So bizarre is the world that we now live in, many liken it to an episode of the TV series *Black Mirror*, which offers a critique on modern society through dystopic realities and parallel worlds. At the start of the lockdowns earlier this year, people in Palestine were commenting that now the world understood what it was like for many them. Particularly in the West Bank and Gaza, the curfews, the closure of public spaces, the inability or difficulty in travelling, the lingering anxiety over the perpetual uncertainty are common features of Palestinian life. The dystopic new reality the world found itself in had many characteristics of daily life that many Palestinians have been suffering from because of nearly a century of ongoing settler-colonial invasion.

Today, the Palestinian national project has abandoned its anticolonial discourse and turned into a neoliberal enforcement regime, privileging the political and economic elites even in times of global crisis. Meanwhile, the Israeli settler-colonial regime continues to expand onto Palestinian land, displace and incarcerate the Indigenous Palestinians. Yet, whilst the powerful take advantage of situations like this, it can also present an opportunity to imagine a different world order and body politic. This paper will explore how the pandemic and current dystopic reality can provide fertile ground for imagining this kind of world, particularly in Palestine where it is more vital than ever to break out of the dystopia and imagine a radical Palestinian future.

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The word *dystopia* comes from Greek and literally means "bad place." In literature and popular culture, the dystopia genre has often been used to highlight structures of power and injustice in society. Many works depict a society full of tyranny and violence, yet retain many characteristics of the 'real' world. Retaining some of these characteristics makes it an effective trope of critique, leaving an audience to ponder if this could happen to them.

In literature, dystopias came about as a response to the utopia, which depict a paradise or perfect society. Most famous of these literary dystopias include George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)[3]. The latter, already incredibly popular and in many school curriculums in North America and Europe, was transformed into an even more popular TV series a few years ago. The timing of this series could not be more apt: as a critique of patriarchy and creeping popularism, *The Handmaid's Tale* was viewed as a cinematic reflection of Trump's America. Indeed, the best and most effective dystopias are those whose nightmarish societies are plausible and not too distant from reality.

In a recent collection of short stories called *Palestine +100: Stories From a Century After the Nakba*,[4] Palestinian writers combine science fiction and dystopic worlds to imagine Palestine 100 years after the 1948 ethnic cleansing. The editor, Basma Ghalayini, explains in the introduction that science fiction is not popular in the Palestinian literary world. Offering an explanation, she writes:

… it is a luxury, to which Palestinians haven't felt they can afford to escape. The cruel present (and the traumatic past) have too firm a grip on Palestinian writers' imaginations for fanciful ventures into possible futures.[5]

Not only is this particular genre a luxury, imagining a future also seems like an indulgent task when so much energy is taken up on the present.

Yet, this collection offers a break from the present through series of haunting tales set in the not-too-distant future—less than 30 years from now. They draw on present manifestations of oppression to create these worlds, from Ahmed Masood's *Application 39*, where Palestinian city states are connected by high-tech underground tunnels, to Samir El-Youssef's *The Association*, where historians are considered enemies of the state for posing a challenge to the enforced collective amnesia. Yet, it is the opening story, Saleem Haddad's *Song of the Birds*, that really blurs the lines between science fiction and dystopic reality. Haddad explores a world in which "death isn't really dying" through the protagonist, Aya, who experiences visitations by her brother, Ziad, who died by suicide some years before. Her brother tells her, "We're just another generation imprisoned by our parents' nostalgia," convincing her that her world is not real.[6]

Ghalayini concludes that the genre of science fiction is not "… a drastic costume change for Palestinian writers, especially those based in Palestine. Everyday life, for them, is a kind of dystopia."[7] Dystopias are worlds where humanity has been stripped away and in Palestine, where a constant process of erasure denies Palestinians even the most basic fundamentals of a dignified life, this is very much the reality.

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Dystopic fiction often distorts the notion of time, referring to a point in history in which the ordinary world is flipped on its head. For Palestinians, the world was turned on its head in 1948 during the Nakba (catastrophe), when both Palestine and its people were removed from the map and from global consciousness as a result of Zionist settler-colonial invasion and the establishment of the State of Israel. Yet, the Nakba did not end in 1948; rather, it is a continuous process reflecting what scholar

Patrick Wolfe described as "a structure, not an event."[8] Settler-colonial formations in general must be understood in terms of incompleteness and ongoing dispossession and attempted elimination of Indigenous peoples. This process is expressed and understood as *al-nakba al-mustamirra* (the ongoing catastrophe) and manifests itself in continued displacement, expulsion, theft of land and incarceration, among many other violent assaults.

In his article "Out of Place, Out of Time," Elias Sanbar explains the Nakba not only as a spatial departure, but also as a temporal one:

> By departing from space, the Palestinians, about whom the whole world agreed to say 'they do not exist', also departed from time. Their history and their past were denied. Their aspirations and their future were forbidden. Hence they found themselves trapped in an ephemeral dimension, and for half a century they would live in limbo, achieving a very special relationship with the concept of duration. Since the present was forbidden to them, they would occupy a temporal space made up of both a past preserved by a memory afflicted by madness and a dreamt-of future which aspired to restore time. And their obsession with places would be accompanied by a fervent desire to reestablish the normality of everyday lives.[9]

This "ephemeral dimension" is a state of neither here nor there and insists that Palestinians live without a history or a future. In an attempt to conquer Indigenous time and space, contemporary settler-colonial regimes dismiss the ongoing nature of the colonising process as ongoing, which continues to disrupt Indigenous time. As part of this process, Palestinian history and heritage was erased and covered up, creating a new temporal reality and a "focal point for what might be called Palestinian time."[10] Indeed, the Nakba is a point in time that connects all Palestinians—whether living in exile as refugees or as nominal citizens of Israel or under military occupation in the 1967 territories—to a specific point in history. This point in history is what "Palestinian time" is centred around and has become the reference point for all other events in the Palestinian narrative. Acting as a 'demarcation line',[11] Palestinians frequently describe events in their memories and collective narratives retrospectively or prospectively to the Nakba. Similarly, in dystopic fiction, there is often an event mysteriously referred to as a transference point from the 'normal' world to the dystopic world.

One of the key aspects of this dystopic Palestinian reality is a never-ending time continuum of tragedy. Scholar Rosemary Sayigh explains this further:

> Suffering caused by the Nakba has to be understood in terms of a continuing state of rightlessness … the Nakba is not merely a traumatic memory, but continually generates new disasters, voiding the present of any sense of security, and blacking out the future altogether.[12]

This "blacking out" is not a coincidence; rather, it is a deliberate attempt to curb Indigenous resistance. Frantz Fanon wrote of French colonialism in Algeria that it "always developed on the assumption that it would last forever," noting that "the structures built, the port facilities, the airdromes, [and] the prohibition of the Arab language" all gave the impression that a rupture in the colonial time was impossible. Indeed, "every manifestation of the French presence expressed a continuous rooting in time and in the Algerian future, and could always be read as a token of an indefinite oppression." Imagining beyond this seemingly perpetual state of being or normalised stasis is by no means an easy thing to do.

The dystopic reality in Palestine is one in which nearly every aspect of Palestinian life is controlled and under surveillance. This varies from one geographic location to another. For example, the restrictions are much more severe in Gaza than in the West Bank and even less so for Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories. Yet, this grading of oppression is part of the dystopic system in which Palestinians have been so dehumanised to the extent that quality of life and privilege are measured on the least number of violations of their fundamental rights.

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In a cognitive practice of temporary relief from reality, many Palestinians invoke nostalgia as a way to deal with the present. It is perhaps pertinent here to offer a definition. The term *nostalgia* comes from two Greek words: *nostos*, meaning 'to return home', and *algos*, meaning 'longing'. Coined in the 17th century, nostalgia was categorised as a medical condition that could be cured, but by the 21st century it was dubbed as an "incurable modern condition"[13] where people dream of the past. Rather poetically, scholar Svetlana Boym explains it as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed."[14] It is often regarded with disdain by younger generations. Ziad from Saleem Haddad's short story in *Palestine +100*, for example, bitterly describes being imprisoned by his parents' nostalgia reflecting a common

understanding of the feeling as a paralysing sentiment.

Fawaz Turki, a Palestinian writer and first-generation survivor of the Nakba, writes about an almost involuntary nostalgic memory of Palestine:

> For it always comes back, that past, as if it were an ache, an ache from a sickness a man didn't know he had. Like the smell of ripened figs at a Perth supermarket that would place me, for one blissful moment under that big fig tree in the backyard of our house in Haifa. Like the taste of sea salt in my mouth as I swam in the Indian Ocean that would take me back to the Mediterranean, our own ancient sea.[15]

Turki's reflection of Palestine is both bitter like "sea salt" and sweet like the "ripened figs," summing up rather poetically this dual nature of nostalgic sentiment. Regardless of its negative connotations, nostalgia is very much a mechanism to deal with the present and for Palestinians, creating a utopia out of past recollections is an effective way to navigate the dystopic present. Nostalgia also informs a huge part of individual and collective memory of Palestine before the Nakba. This is well manifested in Palestinian literature produced in the decades following 1948 in which nostalgia became "the most characteristic element."[16]

Whilst nostalgia can be debilitating, however, it can also play an empowering role for a people who continue to experience loss and dispossession. Nostalgia is a way to preserve knowledge of the past despite furious attempts to negate it. Although nostalgia often omits the less attractive aspects of the past, it simultaneously highlights those aspects that are missing from the present. In this way, it is a sentiment that disregards linear time and can even be a means of "challenging the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress."17

Sitting beyond these conventional temporal boundaries, nostalgia also places Palestine in an irrealis mood of 'what could have been'. Scholar Lena Jayussi explains that Palestinian memories and testimonies often merge the past tense with the subjunctive tense. The subjunctive tense is used to state unreality, something that is not actuality or a conditional state of affairs. It can also be used to express desired or less desired outcomes. Jayussi describes the use of this tense as a "structuring trope directly linked to the here and-now stance; to a knowing now what it all was going to amount to, and a not-knowing-then-what-it-was-to-become; the tensing within the past tense: future past."18 In other words, this is not merely an expression of the past expressed in the present-day context, but also an expression of the past that is still working its way into the present. So much so that it is as though Palestine itself is in a subjunctive mode, or 'as if' mode, where the everyday reality is overshadowed by the inherited memory of a more significant past.

In addition to temporal nostalgia, nostalgia can also be spatial. These two thematic expressions of nostalgia are not mutually exclusive, often overlapping in the collective memories and narrative of Palestinians. A return to the pre-1948 Palestinian is also, for many, a return to the rural, as Palestine was a majority agrarian society. An example is well demonstrated by the Palestinian lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh, who writes of nostalgia in his book *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* (2008)[19]. Shehadeh journeys through the hills of the West Bank and, through anecdotal narratives, traces the drastically changing political terrain. Nostalgic depictions of rural Palestine are often a central element in Palestinian recollections, particularly within the context of rapid urbanisation.

Harnessing both temporal and spatial nostalgia to move from the irrealis mood of 'what could have been' to 'what could be' and 'what will be' is a vital practice in ongoing settler-colonial realities. Nostalgia can help us; not by lamenting a return to the pre-invasion past, but rather by building a new vision on elements of that past that we miss the most.

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> ***We must tell stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe … Remember this: another world is not only possible, she is on her way.***[20]

Arundhati Roy's call above speaks volumes to the Palestinian condition. For decades, the Palestinian people have been told that the only way out of their dystopic reality is through limited visions of the future based on imposed political frameworks. In particular, Palestinians who dare to imagine outside of traditional frameworks are told that their aspirations for liberation and sovereignty are not 'feasible' and that 'politics is the art of the possible'. Yet, feasibility is generally built on the notions of possibility, rationality and practicality that are determined by those in positions of power.

In Palestine, the Oslo framework has defined feasibility for over two decades, dictating that Palestinian futures must be defined within the confines of a two-state framework and that Palestinian sovereignty will only (if at all) be granted in a staged,

conditional process. In other words, the fulfilment of Palestinian fundamental rights are conditioned on the creation of a Palestinian state; anything else is often dismissed as an unachievable utopic fantasy. Feasibility arguments also include the denial of the right of return for Palestinian refugees on the grounds that it is both logistically impossible and would spell the demise of Israel as a majority-Jewish state. Palestinian refugee return is neither logistically impossible nor politically deplorable; there have been many efforts to show the opposite.[21] Moving beyond this notion of feasibility is not easy, not least because of "brainwashing," as described by Roy, but also because of the seemingly permanent status of the colonial entity.

Indigenous scholar and thinker Waziyatawin, writing on settler colonialism in Turtle Island (the United States and Canada), explains how life beyond colonialism is especially difficult to perceive in the context of the "world's greatest and last superpower."[22] For Palestinians, it is also challenging to imagine a future in which the continuous Nakba is not a feature of daily life. For example, many Palestinians find it difficult to conceive of a future where the right of return is fulfilled and all Palestinians are given full rights in their historic homeland. Waziyatawin's call to Indigenous people to think beyond the spatial and temporal confines speaks to this difficulty:

> As Indigenous Peoples, it is essential that we understand the direness of the global situation, recognize the fallacy of industrial civilization's invulnerability, and begin to imagine a future beyond empire and beyond the colonial nation-states that have kept us subjugated.

Imagining beyond empire is not a return to a pre-invasion past or, in the case of Palestine, a return to before 1948. Rather, it is an opportunity to create something better and something just. It is a process in which ways to dismantle colonialism and its structures of oppression are explored, as are ways to radically rebuild after the dismantlement; this is in essence de-colonial work. But this cannot be done without remembering the past and the dystopic rupture. The past and imagining the future are intrinsically tied and recognising them as such is a refusal to conform to the settler-colonial subjugation of their temporalities.

But what exactly does imagining in this context mean? Arjun Appadurai describes imagination as "an organized field of social practices, a form of work … and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility."[23] In other words, imagination is a combination of individualised and socialised perceptions of possibilities. It is this collective element that makes imagining distinct from fantasy. Appadurai makes the distinction clearly:

> The idea of fantasy carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions, and it also has a private, even individualistic sound about it. The imagination, on the other hand, has a projective sense about it … especially when collective, [it] can become the fuel for action. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labor prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape.[24]

This crucial distinction sets imagination well apart from abstract fantasy and in the realm of possibility and action. This articulation of collective imagining is an important one, yet it poses some important questions regarding the spaces this imagination process takes place.

Whilst it is important to critique the fact that many Palestinian spaces, including political institutions and civil society, have been held hostage by agendas dictating very limited realms of possibility, it is simultaneously important to emphasise the need for radical imagining from the bottom up. Palestinian history provides us with examples of this, perhaps most prominently from the First Intifada (1987-93), when Palestinians began to once again imagine different structures of leadership and social relations as well as alternative models of economic self-reliance.

This revolutionary uprising was the result of years of grassroots organising, creating the foundation for mass politicisation and popular struggle. Unions, student groups, collectives and political factions formed a coalition known as the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising. Decisions were made within this body and a rotating leadership system was established in the spirit of representation. The uprising was centred on the notion of 'people's power' as a form of popular and revolutionary consensus. As Linda Tabar writes:

> The left took the lead in this process … affirming the people as the means and the goals of the struggle, the movement invested in people's potential, abilities and their belief in their own agency … the left saw the people as the space in which to build autonomous

> forms of power that could buttress the struggle to create alternative realities.[25]

The practice of creating and imagining alternate realities has also happened in different forms through more recent initiatives that explore return of refugees and the rebuilding of destroyed villages[26] as well as the dismantlement and decolonisation of the settlement landscape in the West Bank.[27] Small-scale initiatives of cooperatives and youth-group agricultural projects aiming to re-establish stronger connections with the land are also an important contribution to imagining a radically different future. Creating plans, blueprints and examples of possibilities such as these are strongly defiant acts in the face of a regime that insists on the denial of one's future. When one articulates an alternative to the dystopia and space for these alternatives to be explored are opened, there is a higher chance for others to do the same.

In Palestine, the pandemic has layered dystopia upon dystopia, making a precarious reality and uncertain future even more so. Whilst infection rates are soaring and the health system is crumbling, Israel continues to encroach on and steal land, demolish homes and arrest and detain hundreds of individuals. Outside of Palestine, the pandemic has not created equal footing nor bridged the gap between the powerful and wealthy and the oppressed and poor. Rather, it has highlighted these divisions and structures of oppression. A return to the world of the pre-pandemic rupture is most likely impossible—the world will be irreversibly different and has already moved towards increased inequality and repression. The heightened surveillance, travel restrictions and authoritarian moves by governments will likely be a common feature of daily life, even after COVID-19 has been brought under control. What this means for Palestinians, where much of that is already a reality, is frightening. But there is hope and Arundhati Roy articulates it beautifully:

> … in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.[28]

Whilst Palestine is an example par excellence of where many of the world's most oppressive and dystopic structures of power converge, this pandemic does offer, as Roy suggests, an opportunity in which to re-examine and imagine. Indeed, the portal from the dystopia to the utopia lies right in front of us, whether or not we can step through it is yet to be seen.

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Pandemic in Palestine, not an analogy

S. C. Molavi

In 2011, Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi released a video essay recorded in Tehran entitled *This is Not a Film*. Along with filmmaker and pro-democracy activist Mohammad Rasoulof, Panahi had earlier been sentenced to six years in prison for alleged 'crimes' against the Iranian state and for inciting opposition protests after the 2009 elections. As part of their punishment, the two prominent figures in Iranian cinema were also banned from writing any kind of scripts, making films, traveling abroad and from speaking with local and foreign media for 20 years.

While pursuing his appeal to a sentence designed to cut off oxygen from his livelihood, Panahi was under effective house arrest. In *This is Not a Film*, Panahi is confined to his apartment and careful to act within the cruel parameters of his injunction, restricting himself to recording with his phone and reflecting on his earlier movies. Speaking to a camera held by his friend—an awkward move for a director used to being behind the scenes—Panahi instead reads aloud the script of the film he wanted to produce. He moves around the furniture in his living room, using tape to transform it into the set he had in mind, for a film he cannot now legally make, on the topic of incarceration.

At one point in this creative improvisation, Panahi laments in frustration and exhaustion of the impossibility of making a film under these conditions: What is cinema in isolation? How can he capture a human experience without access to the spontaneity of the real world? The most precious moments of his earlier works had been improvised, captured unscripted and sourced from the instincts of those around him.

Eventually smuggled out of Iran on a USB stick said to have been hidden in a cake, the extreme limitations mobilised by Panahi in making *This is Not a Film* is a source of inspiration for those living in conditions of closure and isolation seeking to continue their intellectual, artistic and political interventions with a real-world urgency.

Although to different extremes, the first months of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic—and the spread of lockdowns—inverted many of our daily binaries and, to some extent, instigated in their temporary collapse. Practices that passed by quickly before the lockdown we began to experience as slowing down. Our private indoor spaces were projected outside through online mediums used for work, teaching and collaboration. And for some, our local contexts became immediately internationalised with increased cross-continental phone calls and meetings becoming a daily norm.

In the context of the ongoing pandemic, where lockdowns and border closures have mushroomed around the world, cutting the access of practitioners to their communities and resources, my colleagues and I at Forensic Architecture[1] took inspiration from Panahi's provocative use of the elements in his immediate surroundings. We began investigating the NSO Group,[2] an Israeli cyber-weapons manufacturer whose surveillance software has been linked to governments illegally hacking the communication devices of human rights figures, lawyers, journalists and opposition activists—many of them our close friends and former collaborators.[3]

Relegated to virtual forms of communication that make us all more vulnerable to monitoring, we activated our existing communities and immediate resources to document the rise and reach of NSO's cyber-surveillance tools around the world. Part of an ecosystem of Israeli cyber-weapons companies, these were technologies that we knew had been employed on Palestinians living under its colonial occupation for decades.[4]

We sought to mobilise Forensic Architecture's skillsets and methodologies to further activate the data and research already conducted on the reported illegal use of NSO software around the world. But in a historical moment in which our lives had been increasingly abstracted behind screens, we wanted to communicate the ways in which the immaterial nature of digital hacking repeatedly intersects with physical violence and psychological terror. While under lockdown, with some of us separated from families across the dividing borders, we spent months data-mining any report, exposure or documentation of the extensive use of NSO's surveillance tools by a range of liberal-democratic, authoritarian and/or settler-colonial governments against those daring to dissent.

Generous allies and committed organisations helped us conduct dozens of interviews with investigators and targets of NSO's invasive software, all of whom participated knowing that their contribution may subject them to increased monitoring. When speaking to us, rights defenders from around the world (including Canada, India, Israel/Palestine, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Togo, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States) recounted the layered forms of state and corporate violence they confront on a daily basis—struggles that only intensified with the deepening of the global health crisis.

As the months passed, the pandemic enabled a rise in racialised policing, economic disenfranchisement and global border control through the activation of 'states of emergency'. In so doing, the global health crisis made the human rights work of the targets of NSO's spyware with whom we spoke all the more vital. At the same time, the pandemic also furthered the desire of states to employ phone applications and digital technology to track and monitor devices with the declared aim of limiting the spread of the virus.

With Israel's first wave of infections in March 2020, the country's transitional government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu worked from an existing 'state of emergency' to adopt two additional emergency regulations with two interrelated objectives. First, to provide Israeli police authorities with an expanded jurisdiction to enforce the country's social isolation regulations, and second, to enable the use of digital surveillance by the Israeli Shin Bet (its internal security service) to track the location and movements of persons infected with Covid-19.[5]

As global debates around privacy rights and public health in the early months of the pandemic began to proliferate, we discovered a simultaneous rise of Israeli cyber-weapons manufacturers seeking to market their tracking software to health authorities. Among these was NSO, which had been actively pitching their

monitoring software to contain the virus to both the Israeli government and to dozens of other health ministries around the world.[6]

At first glance, the desire of profit-driven cyber-weapons companies producing software designed to violate our privacy—and used to silence and intimidate human rights defenders around the world—to assist in preventing the spread of a devastating pandemic appears obviously cynical. But having data-mined many dozens of reports documenting the damage done to opposition voices with their government's use of NSO's hacking software, we were more alarmed at the possibility that the company could now also access people's medical information. Others like us who had investigated NSO were concerned about their back-end access to personal information and the intersection of this access with a state's political silencing and surveillance of vulnerable individuals and communities.

But more than this, the implications of the global spread and application of Israeli tools for mass monitoring and control to confront the spread of Covid-19 deserved interrogation. The normalisation of the use of Israeli software around the world cannot be separated from Israel's decades of settler-colonial practice in Palestine and its military incursions in the region.

As Nadim Nashif and Marwa Fatafta argue, surveillance of Palestinians—in the form of "population registries, identification cards, land surveys, watchtowers, imprisonment and torture"—have historically been an integral part of Israeli practices of settler-colonial control.[7] Although such 'low-tech surveillance' tools continue to be applied as practices of Israeli coloniality, a range of new digital technologies that enable "phone and internet monitoring and interception, CCTV and biometric data collection" have today enabled surveillance of Palestinian lives to a profound degree.[8]

With this, our ongoing investigation into NSO indirectly alluded to the ways in which settler-colonial structures have been activated during the pandemic. Indeed, these developments are broader indicators of the multifaceted means through which the Covid-19 outbreak has intensified existing racialised structures and militarised practices. However, as this paper argues, while lines of continuity across anti-oppression movements are effective forms of trans-bordered mobilisations, the important dividing lines that set apart these struggles also deserve attention. Therefore, along with the global spread of these technologies of control, the unique ways in which these practices play out and give shape to effective resistance in different contexts ought to be emphasised.

Pandemic as a 'settler-colonial moment'

Settler colonialism, the late Patrick Wolfe reminds us, is "a structure, not an event."[9] And while its practices and technologies have transformed over time, the salient features of indigenous and racialised dispossession as an organising principle of settler-colonial power structures are ongoing. Today, and particularly in moments of 'emergency', these structures function alongside and enhance other forms of intrusion including imperial, corporate and extractivist varieties of racialised dispossession.

The incitement of settler-colonial structures to confront the spread of Covid-19 gained attention in mid-March 2020 when a non-Indigenous couple from Montreal, apparently fearing the virus, travelled thousands of kilometres across the country to Old Crow, an Indigenous community in northern Yukon. Seeking an "isolated community to hide from Covid-19," the couple expressed that they figured the remote community was "the safest place" to weather through the pandemic.[10]

Pointing to the particular vulnerability of Indigenous communities such as Old Crow, Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation expressed that in addition to limited medical services, high respiratory illnesses and the large number of elderly residents, "we don't even have enough housing for our own members."[11]

As urban elites around the world fled to their second homes and summer cottages in response to the pandemic, non-Indigenous claims made to remote Indigenous communities such as Old Crow for safe accommodation are an extension of Canada's colonial history of extraction. These practices continue to give shape to its contemporary record of Indigenous dispossession. In the context of the pandemic, the logic of extraction and replacement that delimits contemporary settler-colonial structures is here activated with cross-border travel that jeopardises the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples. As Chief Tizya-Tramm expressed, "Our community, albeit remote, is not a life raft for the rest of the world."[12]

The activation of settler-colonial legacies is also reflected in the fact that, in places like the United States, the two populations hit hardest by Covid-19 have been Indigenous nations and Black Americans—also the two demographics most impacted by its record of settler colonialism, notably over-policing and incarceration.[13]

Indeed, whether it is arguments made in April 2020 by French doctor and head of intensive care at Cochin Hospital in Paris, Jean-Paul Mira, to run vaccine trials "in Africa, where there are no masks, no treatments, no resuscitation," or the announcement in late July that Israeli medical researchers will travel to India to try

"new rapid coronavirus testing methods on thousands of the country's Covid-19 patients"—structures of whiteness are increasingly being activated during the ongoing pandemic, pointing to the dispensability of colonised and racialised bodies.

Activating technologies of coloniality in Palestine

Part of confronting the present condition is replacing familiar and reductive settler-colonial narratives of 'Indigenous mortality' that arose during the pandemic, with an understanding of the structural violence that precedes it. It is the nature and texture of this existing violence that has aggravated the impact of the pandemic on Indigenous and racialised peoples.

Gaza City under lockdown Credit: Ain Media Gaza (August 2020)

Having spent over seven decades dividing Palestinian communities into enclaves and designing legal structures of racialised domination, Israel already had the infrastructure in place to emulate the rising global health strategy of closures to combat the spread of the pandemic. State tools in the form of lockdowns, curfews, mass surveillance and strict border regimes—tools that suddenly became commonplace practices for other governments to limit the spread of infections—were activated beyond their existing functions in the hyper-militarised landscape confronting Palestinians.

Gaza City under lockdown Credit: Ain Media Gaza (August 2020)

From the onset of the pandemic, and not unlike the experiences of other Indigenous and racialised communities, the health and well-being of Palestinian citizens, residents and refugees living under Israeli sovereign power was both consistently neglected in relation to that of Israeli-Jewish citizens—and also actively impeded by Israel in the moments when Palestinians would themselves seek to combat the spread of Covid-19 in their over-policed neighbourhoods.[14]

In these early months of the pandemic, Palestinians were often praised by observers as a people 'experienced' in dealing with closures and isolation. The occupied Gaza Strip, for instance, was described as one of the only places with no reported cases, remarked by some as an 'advantage' of the Israeli blockade during a global pandemic.[15] But such arguments—similar to the position internalised by that non-Indigenous couple fleeing to Old Crow—are extensions of settler-colonial narratives. They ignore that in a context where militarised structures of racialised segregation are already intensely activated, states like Israel are able to continue their practices of Indigenous dispossession even during a pandemic.[16]

Gaza City under lockdown Credit: Ain Media Gaza (August 2020)

Far from 'protection' and 'safety' from the virus, communities living in enforced isolation—whether in refugee camps, Indigenous reserves, impoverished neighbourhoods or colonial enclaves—are made more vulnerable during a global health crisis. Those living in enclosed spaces know that once the virus arrives, it will proliferate.

Gaza City under lockdown Credit: Ain Media Gaza (August 2020)

Another key feature of Israel's colonial template that continues to be activated due to the pandemic is its security and surveillance infrastructure. Military agencies, intelligence agents and branches of government usually tasked with 'national security' concerns were brought in to serve an epidemiological function. In addition to the Shin Bet's use of invasive surveillance tools to track the location and movement of persons infected by Covid-19,[17] the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, was tasked with activating its international networks to acquire medical equipment, expertise and manufacturing technology from abroad.[18] Further, Israel's Military Intelligence Directorate Research Division and Unit 8200 launched a national coronavirus information centre, "utilising the intelligence branch's unique ability to gather the information compiled in Israel and across the globe and use artificial intelligence and machine learning" to centralise infection and morbidity statistics gathered from all available hospitals, labs, health funds and ministries.[19]

Aimed at improving the Health Ministry's decision-making process for stopping the rate of infections in real-time, the securitisation of Israel's pandemic response worked from an existing militarised infrastructure whose simultaneous, if not primary, function is the dispossession of Palestinians. Pointing to the dangers of outsourcing a national health strategy to the security industry, Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel filed a legal petition with the Israeli Supreme Court in mid-March to challenge the granting of sweeping powers to the government without parliamentary oversight.[20] Although the Supreme Court had initially ruled in favour of this petition,[21] the ruling was reversed when the Knesset passed the "Major Coronavirus Law" on 23 July 2020, enabling the government to implement emergency Covid-19 regulations limiting individual rights and liberties of Israeli citizens without parliamentary supervision.[22]

Resistance in times of Covid-19

Like other observers in the early months of the pandemic, I, too, immediately thought of the Palestinian experience as a useful political lens through which we can understand the activation of existing settler-colonial structures during the pandemic. But while the Palestinian context is relevant beyond its hyper-militarised borders, the unique ways in which these colonial practices play out in the context of Israeli sovereign power must also be emphasised.

Quite intentionally, the title of this paper borrows from an article written by a dear friend over a decade ago, entitled "Not an Analogy: Israel and the Crime of

Apartheid"—a text that was heavily consequential in my own learning.[23] In it, he outlined the dangers of over-emphasising similarities and differences in collective experiences of state violence—a practice that can narrow the tactics mobilised by resistance struggles to confront that power.

Examining the ways in which the pandemic has activated existing settler-colonial structures in Palestine is a useful framework through which we can understand the mobilisation of similar repressive practices and structures elsewhere. As scholars, investigators and community organisers, it helps us draw lines of continuity across anti-oppression movements, rendering the demands of the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle increasingly relevant to other societies worldwide. But as much as it points to how these shared colonial practices are used by states in their health strategies against the pandemic, it also exposes the important dividing lines across movements that set these struggles apart.

Rather than bringing cities like Bethlehem, Haifa and Ramallah closer to places like Toronto, Rome or Cape Town, the imposition of lockdowns, curfews and strict border controls in these spaces points to key differences in the racialised systems of inequality that exist in each of those contexts. In the same manner that Jafar Panahi's house arrest is not the lockdown or curfew many of us experienced—nor is self-isolation during the pandemic the same as the solitary confinement experienced during imprisonment[24]—the use of settler-colonial technologies of closure ought not collapse the contexts of particular collective experiences. And perhaps as importantly, it also ought not collapse the specificity of the tactics of resistance that make sense in a Palestinian context.

On this note, I end by quoting the advice given to the world by a friend and colleague in Gaza, Mohammed Azaiza, who in those first weeks of lockdown presciently understood enough to ask what would linger once the global 'crisis' of the pandemic is over. Writing from the feelings of fear and concern for the future brought by lockdowns and arbitrary restrictions, Azaiza expressed profound solidarity with those abroad losing family members to the virus in isolation. But while starting from the position of the key differences in the political contexts of lockdowns experienced around the world, Azaiza maintains and emphasises the ways communities can nevertheless learn from each other's struggles by sharing some of the practices of resistance what work for him in coping with isolation in Gaza:

Be patient—no one knows when the isolation will end.

Build a daily routine and try to stick to it.

Get up early, don't surrender to sleep.

Exercise for 20 minutes.

Find time for an afternoon nap.

Wash dishes—it relieves stress and keeps your hands clean.

Find ways to work at home.

Don't just listen to news, make time for music and reading.

Delegate authority to your kids, they love to lead.

Get some sun through the window every day, it will give you energy.

Try to quit smoking.

Cook good food.

Stay home.

Take care of yourselves.[25]

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Endnotes

1 I am the dedicated Israel-Palestine researcher at Forensic Architecture, an interdisciplinary research agency founded by architect and intellectual Eyal Weizman that is based at Goldsmiths University of London, which employs spatial and media technologies to conduct investigations of state and corporate violence, often with and on behalf of affected communities. Our work can be found here: https://forensic-architecture.org/.

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Pandemics and Colonialist-Capitalist Oppression

By Amira Silmi

Introduction:

The spread of a pandemic leads to a state of abnormality, chaos and a departure from normal standards and regulations. At the same time, it creates a certain extreme situation where authoritarian actions and institutional practices take their most drastic form. This enables us to reveal some of their previously invisible dimensions. According to Michel Foucault, it is this extremism that exposes power but it can also take the form of a "state of exception," as described by Giorgio Agamben. And while this unveils the hypocrisy of liberal democracies that always included a certain 'exception' (albeit in a covert manner), the greatest risk lies in declaring the state of exception and having it accepted as a normality. Therefore, instead of ending the normality-exceptionality dichotomy, they would create a new normality accompanied with new exceptions (as seen in the past six months). This would take place as long as the transformations created by the pandemic do not include a change in the roots and structure of power relations but, rather, an expansion of their scope and field of action (intervention) and possibly the addition of new authoritarian elements and other forms of oppression and exploitation.

The aim of this article is to show how the Covid-19 pandemic shed light on the gaps, fissures and deficiencies in the current global system, with special focus on the 'exceptions' related to unskilled workers in what are considered 'vital' or 'necessary' industries in light of the health protection measures implemented in different countries, including Palestine. Through examples, the paper will ask questions about the exacerbation and exposure of exclusion and oppression during pandemics, and to what extent would that exposure lead to the 'normalisation' of the exacerbated forms of oppression and exploitation—incorporating these rules into the 'new normal' created by the pandemic aiming at curbing its spread—affecting workers and the poor. In this way, the exposure of these forms of exploitation and oppression seem to be leading to normalisation rather than exposing the contradictions of a capitalist world, and thus opening the possibility of the struggle against it.

Although a pandemic leads to a crisis in the prevalent system and creates problems in daily and institutionalised practices, it is difficult for it to lead to a revolution. And, despite that, several philosophers such as Hegel and Foucault saw that confronting death is a moment of freedom; the fear and panic resulting from a pandemic do not lead to freedom as much they lead to chaos or anarchy. This chaos and departure from the normative or organised legitimises the penetration of state regulation into the smallest details of everyday life, in which governmental control pertains directly to citizens' physical and social existence (Ven den Berge, 2020:3). In other words, fear is spread and exploited; at the same time, it is regulated by various social and political institutions in a way that consolidates or reformulates practices of subjugation and exploitation.

Slavoj Žižek sees that fear is not the best way to deal with real danger. For example, the best way to deal with a pandemic is not by buying excessive quantities of toilet paper but, rather, by enhancing the cooperation between countries to provide the needed equipment and materials for medical treatment. Žižek likens the state of pandemic to a state of war, where the state intervenes and conducts military campaigns to provide the necessary weapons as well as cooperates with other countries in its fight against threats (an American model par excellence). Also, as in the case of military campaigns, there is a need to exchange information and coordinate plans, and this—according to Žižek—is the communism that is needed. Žižek supports the idea that free-market globalisation is dying, but another form of globalisation that recognises interdependence and evidence-based collective action is being born (2020a). Underrating the knowledge of his readers, Žižek overlooks the fact that the current system—whether in its contemporary global form or the classical form established in the 19th century—was always based on interdependence. Probably *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx is the best reference on interdependence, although Marx describes it as selfish and competitive, between individuals or states as a basic principle upon which capitalism is based, strengthened by the division of labour that ensures the reproduction of class gaps and relations of subordination or slavery between individuals and states alike. The question needs to revolve around the *form* of this interdependence, and this question as we know it from Marx and from reality cannot be posed without first asking about the organisation of labour both locally and globally. This includes questions of the modes of production, control over the means of production, division of labour and mechanisms of distributing the products of labour. Any talk about an alternative world without raising these points would prevent the departure from the limits set by capitalism for a leftist discourse, which remains confined to a bourgeois western mode of knowing, and in the case of Žižek, to populism.

Žižek defends himself against the charge of believing in a liberal utopia by asserting that his discussed solidarity has a material basis and that global solidarity is in the interest of survival "of all and each of us" (2020a). Žižek within his populist discourse does not see that there is a need to ask how the meaning of the term 'interest' varies in different cultural, social, historical and ideological contexts (e.g., which lead to the American obsession with buying huge quantities of toilet paper or standing in long lines of weapons stores). Moreover, Žižek does not see that it is necessary to distinguish between "the interest of each of us" and "the interest of all," although he might need to be reminded that, according to mathematical and philosophical logic, the sum of all parts does not equal the whole. Žižek also does not see a problem in considering rational egoism as the main motive behind this cooperation, in addition to the contradiction in his discussion about an alternative world order based on the same old foundations and capitalistic principles. Even more importantly, the main issue with Žižek's proposal is: who are the 'all' whose interests are similar?

In another article written by Žižek at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic last February, Žižek states that global threats give birth to global solidarity, whereas our petty differences become insignificant and danger leads us to work together to find a solution. According to Žižek, disasters make people cooperate; hence, the coronavirus will lead them to ignore differences and recognise equality since it does not distinguish between poor and rich (2020b). Žižek is fully convinced that the

differences between people are insignificant compared to the virus. This thinking is not completely shocking when it comes from people who do not realise that the number of people who die of starvation and wars ignited by imperialism is much higher than those who die from viruses. Žižek's limitation is the problem of many western philosophers who are incapable of seeing what takes place beyond their limited circles.

We might expect, like Žižek, or as written by Albert Camus (2013), that similar to all the evils in the world, the pandemic helps people rise above and beyond themselves in their fight against it, whereas there would no longer be individual destinies but only a collective destiny made of the pandemic and the emotions shared by all, the strongest of which being the sense of exile and deprivation with all the crosscurrents of revolt and fear. Therefore, since the pandemic threatens everyone, we might assume that it would promote equality, but actually—and as explained by Camus later in his chronicle about the plague—it had the opposite effect and exacerbated the sense of injustice rankling in people's hearts. Ultimately, people do not desire the inerrable equality of death. Also, this form of isolated death strips life and death from any remaining sense of collectivity, and thus from any possibility of opposition or resistance.

In the 'state of exception' created by a pandemic, the lives of people become subject to the state's direct authority. According to Agamben, this is what is currently happening with the Covid-19 pandemic in western countries; just like in the case of terrorism, the pandemic gives the state a pretext to adopt exceptional measures. Agamben also sees that the problem lies in what people are asked to sacrifice for the sake of security, hence the protection of their life comes at the expense of something else. Moreover, biosecurity has shown itself capable of eliminating one's political activity and social life. In fact, according to Agamben, one should be concerned not with what is happening now but with what may ensue from the technological interventions that limit people's political lives and freedoms (2020a).

Agamben also explains that the problem is in the measures taken by the Italian government (as well as other governments), which imposed strict social distancing measures and prevented movement. This is because they turned every person into a 'suspect of contagion' in a similar way to the adopted laws and procedures in the fight against terrorism. This similarity becomes clear when each suspect of contagion is threatened with imprisonment if they do not abide by the instructions. Also, a sinister picture is drawn for those who are asymptomatic but are suspects of contagion. These people are portrayed as evil who harm others through infection (2020a).

The biggest danger, according to Agamben, is the dissolution of relations between people as a result of anti-pandemic measures, such as the impermissibility of approaching or touching another human being, which means the disappearance of neighbourly relations between people. These procedures led to the closure of schools and universities and the move to online classes; putting a stop to gatherings and personal discussions about political and cultural concerns and moving those conversations to digital means; and the introduction of machines wherever possible to replace every contact—every 'contagion'—among humans (2020e) instead of the collective struggle and solidarity.

Hence, contrary to Žižek's position, Agamben explains that fear of a pandemic reveals many things to which people have turned a blind eye, and mainly that society no longer believes in anything except life and would be willing to sacrifice practically everything—including normal living conditions, social relations, work, friendships, affections and their religious and political beliefs—when confronted with the danger of getting sick. This means that life and the fear of losing it is not something that unites people but, rather, blinds and separates them (2020e). Therefore, society would have no other value than survival, whereas this survival would not be from an external enemy against whom society is united, but, rather, from an enemy that exists within each of us. Hence, the pandemic (and specifically the policies and measures 'to combat it') might lead to enhancing the detachment of a person from themselves, which actually started in the first centuries of capitalism.

The state of panic, fear and insecurity created by a pandemic only strengthens a person's propensity towards controlling their destiny, which is actually the basis of western enlightenment. This tendency either leads to the complete surrender of one's fate to the state and a shift towards selfish citizenship that characterises western liberal democracies, or it would lead to chaos where every person would be treated as a life-threatening enemy. In many cases, however, both features correlate to varying degrees. It is also worth noting that a state of crisis or emergency is usually based on an excessive form of fear and panic, when people are not able to recognise their humanity in the sense of being social, political and moral beings. Consequently, they would no longer be able to perceive the humanity of others, and this is what Agamben means when he talks about the pandemic's (or the related panic's) reduction of a person's being to a life. In spite of that, Agamben

sees that something positive might arise from a pandemic in that it prompts people to question their previous way of life. However, the fear of losing one's life cannot be the basis for a progressive or revolutionary action, and it usually results in a tyrannical authority that draws the sword on the necks of people with the pretext of protecting them from themselves (2020d).

Since the contagion is not limited to the biological dimension, communication and transportation represent the social forms of contagion. This means that the state feels obliged to manage and limit its spread as part of its 'security' role. However, in the case of a pandemic, a problem arises: "How does one secure something that is by definition complex, unstable and unpredictable?" (Thacker, 2009:143) As indicated by Agamben, a patient infected with a disease needs to be secured (saved from death), but there also needs to be security against this person. Consequently, the spread of a pandemic and its ability to 'incarnate' becomes similar to Satan and the doctor who fights it becomes the priest who is capable of torturing, burning or killing people to save them from their demons (Agamben, 2020b; Thacker, 2009:148). This way of dealing with a pandemic—i.e., as a demon and 'satanic incarnation' where the victim is also an offender—means that during a pandemic we no longer talk about health rights or the state's role in providing adequate healthcare independent of market relations and mechanisms. Therefore, in this case, the discussion would revolve around the ways to make health an individual duty that is also considered a security issue (Agamben, 2020b).

Pandemics in Colonised Contexts

The fear and panic that enabled the authorities of European countries (as well as some non-European ones like China, Russia, India, South Korea, Brazil, South Africa and others) to turn the health issue into a security issue, similar to cases of terrorism, were related extensively—as shown by Sbeih Sbeih—to the pandemic's exposure of what is called 'the illusion of certainty'; the realisation of our inability to be certain or make predictions; which entails the collapse of one of the tenets of western modernity in its philosophy, science and economy. Therefore, according to Sbeih, the pandemic "brought back truth to the forefront" (2020).

Nevertheless, the problem of the desire to control, the illusion of certainty and the principle of predictability are inapplicable in colonised societies where risks and instability (which feed into the state of uncertainty) are considered the daily and habitual features of life in colonised societies.

However, the pandemic did not have a similar impact among all segments of the Palestinian people. For example, the discourse and discussion about the pandemic were different from one class to another and from one area to another, whereas the middle class—and particularly amongst office employees and technocrats in Ramallah—had a greater tendency towards fear and panic due to the loss of control and inability to predict, as seen clearly in their reaction towards the Palestinian laborers' return from their workplaces in the occupied 1948 lands, stigmatising them as the 'bearers and spreaders' of the pandemic. In other words, their illusions did not disappear but was actually the basis of the fear of losing a 'certainty' which was never real, but was related to the state-building project that created the illusion of a 'stable life' among many elite groups, especially in the city of Ramallah.

Nevertheless, the fact that Palestinian society is colonised with a lot of uncertainty (i.e., the instability and risk involved in any activity performed by a Palestinian person) was behind the different manner in which they (and especially the laborers) dealt with the uncertainty imposed by the pandemic. Therefore, that uncertainty, which was dealt with behind the lens of the first 'illusion of certainty', was not similar to that of societies governed by a bourgeois democracy, i.e., it could not turn into a source of authority that controls people's lives and directs their behaviour. This is because the political and economic oppression to which colonised peoples are subjected does not allow for the rule of biopolitics, whether in its normative or exceptional forms, as could be seen vividly in the case of Palestinian workers, as well as other groups who refused to submit to the 'emergency' measures.

'Men in the Sun': The Repeated Death

With the spread of Covid-19 in March 2020, the Palestinian Authority found itself in a similar situation to that of other governments subject to neoliberal colonialist dictatatorship. At first, the Palestinian Authority did not see itself capable of preventing the continuous movement of workers on both sides of the Green Line. While disregarding Israel's exploitation of the movement of Palestinian laborers, the PA thought that demanding the Occupation (i.e., the 'economic partner' in the neoliberal vision) to provide safe and healthy working conditions for Palestinian workers would be enough. However, since the colonised are usually employed by the coloniser as cheap (and disposable) labour, such a demand by the PA was unrealistic.

In fact, after the first worker was thrown to the side of the road after being suspected of carrying the infection, the Palestinian government demanded that the workers

return to their homes. However, there were two main issues that were overlooked in this case:

First: Wage workers in a capitalist system do not exist outside of being workers; hence, a person's resorting to 'bourgeois' standards of good citizenship does not apply since workers can only perceive themselves as workers (in other words, the worker needs to 'sell' his labour power to provide a livelihood for himself and his family). This explains why many Palestinian workers feel the need to assert their patriotism and loyalty to the president. But the risk involved as workers do not stop them from going to work.

Second: There was a contradiction between the PA's illusionary political sovereignty (i.e., the ability to exercise bio power) and its economic dependence and lack of any 'security sovereignty' on the ground. This is because the PA established a subordinate relationship with the occupation in which Palestinians working inside the Green Line and in settlements (one's denial of the legitimacy of the settlements does not change the reality) constitute an essential element. It should also be noted that Palestinian workers have not been 'a weak point in the healthy Palestinian body' as they have been described, but are the main symptom of the body's illness.

Similar to any other capitalist-colonial enterprise whose aim is to uproot people from their land, the Zionist settler-colonial project transformed the Palestinians from a peasant society into one of laborers who work in non-agricultural jobs in pursuit of higher wages that meet capitalism's continuous needs (Khamaisi, 2013: 204). As indicated by Adel Samara, the confiscation of land, prevention of Palestinian agricultural exports and enhancmet of crop production required by the Israeli market harmed independent and small producers who either had their lands confiscated or were no longer able to compete with Israeli products invading the Palestinian market. Therefore, the workforce in Palestinian villages who could not find jobs in Palestinian towns had no option but to either emigrate to oil-rich Arab countries or be hired by Israeli employers (Samara, 2000: 22).

The Palestinian workers hired by Israeli employers—whether beyond the Green Line or in settlements and industrial areas established within the West Bank—are characterised as 'cheap labour' in jobs on the lowest level of the Israeli labour market, especially in the fields of construction, agriculture and cleaning. In the aforementioned workplaces, Palestinian laborers are treated like migrant workers, which gives them their traits in terms of being cheap, exploitable, unprotected and deprived of any employment rights and benefits enjoyed by Israeli workers. At the same time, Palestinian workers do not come with the political or economic costs that might result from the recruitment of foreign or migrant workers.

What distinguishes Palestinian workers is that they can be kept in the 'segregated places' designated for them. They work in Israeli businesses on a daily or weekly basis, then go back to their isolated areas that are surrounded by Israeli walls and military checkpoints. This cannot be done in the case of foreign migrant workers, who dwell within Israeli society and may decide to become citizens with full rights. This is not desired by Israel, especially if that person is not a European Jew or is a poor Black or Brown immigrant from Africa or Asia.

Moreover, Israel's colonial-settler policies on the ground—including opening markets for foreign investments and privatisation, and technological advancement and reliance on electronic work—increase the vulnerability of Palestinian workers in the Israeli labour market and confine them to specific sectors with low wages and no job security (Abu Asbah and Abu Nasra, 2013; 219). This vulnerability did not only result from the privatisation and neoliberal policies adopted by the Israeli government, but also emanated from the colonised status of Palestinian workers, which makes them more susceptible to exploitation. There remains a link between the Zionist settler-colonial project that seeks to eliminate the existence of Palestinians and their precarious, temporary and marginal status as workers. Ultimately, the employment of Palestinian workers becomes a source of Israeli political power and a basis for competition between Israeli political parties, and it can be even used as a cover for the colonialist oppression and plunder, as well as helping to cover the deficiency of the PA and its failure to achieve political or economic progress for the Palestinian people (Rosenhek, 2003).

Samara points out that the state of subordination and political-economic subjugation was enhanced through the Oslo Accords and the Paris Protocol, which ignored the issue of Palestinian sovereignty on the ground and prevented Palestinians from formulating a special developmental plan for the agricultural sector. Also, the Oslo Accords gave Israel control over the goods that can be exported and imported, as well as giving preference to Israel in its exporting of goods to the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, the Oslo Accords discussed cooperation in the field of labour exchange while enabling each party to determine this movement. However, in practice, the Israeli occupation remained in control over the movement of Palestinian workers, mainly under the pretext of security considerations and as a

tool for political and economic blackmail against the PA and the Palestinian people and workers. At the same time, the PA was never able to politically or economically control the movement of Palestinian workers at Israeli work sites because the PA formulated its development plans on depending on Palestinian laborers in Israeli workplaces instead of devising developmental strategies that guarantee a certain level of Palestinian independence from the Israeli economy (Samara, 2000: 23).

Working in the 1948 Territories: Compulsion and Risk

A report by the Israeli workers' rights organisation (Kav LaOved) shows that the privatisation of Israeli state authorities and the transfer of responsibilities to employers increased the restrictions on Palestinian workers, creating different forms of forced labour. For example, work permits are registered in the name of the specific employer, only for whom they can work. Therefore, if the worker leaves that employer, he would lose his work permit, which means that he is restricted by the employer and is totally dependent on them. In the case of migrant workers, these arrangements were previously described as 'a form of slavery in modern clothing'. Also, the Israeli supreme court declared this practice illegal but is only applicable in the case of migrant workers (Kav LaOved, 2018: 18). It should also be noted that connecting a worker to an employer in a legal manner does not necessarily mean that he will work for that registered employer. Consider, for example, how permits are distributed, issued and linked to certain contractors or employers, which paved the way to what is called 'the work permit business'. In this business, the registered employer transfers workers to another employer and in return, they receive certain fees incurred by the worker, who pays large sums of money to brokers. In practice, more than half of Palestinian workers do not work for the employer who obtained permits for them, whereas the worker pays thousands of shekels a month to transfer between the registered employer and the true employer (19).

Even after a worker obtains a work permit from the Israeli side, his movement will remain confined to the workplace; it is not permissible for him to be present at any other location beyond the Green Line. Also, the Israeli employer must transfer workers from the checkpoint to the work site and vice versa, and even those who are allowed to stay overnight are not allowed to leave the workplace, whereas their employer is considered the 'authority' that denies them freedom of movement (15).

This dependency and subjugation of the worker leaves him vulnerable to other forms of exploitation. For example, many employers circumvent payment of social benefits to workers—such as paying part of the salary in cash—to avoid paying a more for social benefits like retirement, compensation and accident-related fees which are calculated on the basis of a smaller wage than the actual wage paid to the worker. Furthermore, the employers do not commit to reporting the minimum number of working days, which enables them to violate workers' rights (25).

Moreover, Palestinian workers do not demand compensation for any accidents or injuries. The reason behind that is the lack of knowledge, the fear of losing workdays or the fear of dealing with the authorities. In other cases, the employer does not submit the required forms for the worker to obtain benefits in the case of an injury. Also, health-related fees deducted from the workers' wages are not transferred to the PA but to the Israeli Ministry of Finance, which is not especially committed to taking care of the employees. The amounts that are deducted as job-related 'health services' do not reach their rightful beneficiaries (37).

It should also be noted that Palestinian workers do not have any union representation or protection from any party (34), whereas the established committee to communicate between the Palestinian Federation of Trade Unions and the General Organisation of Workers in Israel (Histadrut) did nothing to protect exploited Palestinian workers. The committee was more preoccupied with exchanging discussion and arguments, whereas the two said organisations competed over the amounts entitled by Palestinian workers.

In addition to these great difficulties, exhaustion and the absence of any free time, Palestinian workers are exposed to serious work hazards especially in the construction business, which is known to be the most dangerous sector (17). Palestinian workers constitute 18% of laborers in the Israeli construction sector, and most of them work in hazardous jobs. In spite of that, the past decade saw a rise in the percentage of Palestinian workers in this sector, not to mention Palestinian workers in the settlements and those who do not need work permits (12). Palestinian workers also represent a large percentage of fatal injuries (nearly half of them) in the construction sector: 47% in 2016, and almost 50% in 2018. Moreover, Palestinian workers were the victims of more than half of non-fatal injury cases in the construction sector. However, only 5% of the workers who received compensation for injuries in the construction sector were Palestinian, although there is sufficient data that shows that the injuries suffered by Palestinian workers are more serious than those suffered by Israeli workers, and the needed time to recover from these injuries and return to work is longer for Palestinian workers (35).

In addition to the aforementioned exploitation of 'legal' workers (i.e., those who have work permits), there are other forms of exploitation and suffering experienced by those who do not have the needed permits and seek to find a job beyond the Green Line. For example, many workers are forced to smuggle themselves inside cars, water containers, cargo trucks or even in concrete mixer trucks. The smuggling process is usually performed by a 'smuggling pioneer' from inside the Green Line or the West Bank. Hence, there is a high cost of moving across the Green Line, both financially and in terms of access-related risks. For this reason, most of the workers prefer to stay inside the Green Line throughout the week, sometimes even for two weeks or a month. Many of them do not guarantee that they will find a job after being smuggled, hence they return to their homes and may need to borrow money to try again to find a job inside the Green Line (Véronique Bontemps, 2011:6).

These workers face substantial risks from the minute they step out of their house, and this risk is the everyday condition in which they earn their livelihood. Even those who are 'legal workers' face a risk when they choose to sleep overnight in Israel and not to go home within the times specified on the permit to save part of the daily transportation cost. Therefore, the legality of their work becomes the precondition for their illegality because of the huge restrictions imposed on Palestinian workers. Hence, they resort to 'illegal' actions in a constant manner to access their workplace in the 1948 territories and circumvent the unjust Israeli laws and practices (7).

In addition to the aforementioned risks—which comprise a basic component of their work beyond the Green Line—many Palestinian workers see that their work in Israel largely depends on luck. This is because they run the risk of being caught by the occupation soldiers while trying to cross the Green Line. Another matter of luck is to find a job after reaching the 'workstation' in the 1948 territories. Some of them manage to find a job there, while others return home without earning a single penny. With this risk and luck comes great fear, such as the fear of being arrested, humiliated and insulted. It should be noted that the workers' exposure to insults and humiliation is imminent in all cases, regardless of whether they are caught or whether they find a job. This insult and humiliation are enhanced through the workers' exploitation by smugglers and business owners, and many times workers are forced to accept this exploitation due to their illegal status. Another form of torture is having to sleep close to their workplaces inside the Green Line, being forced to hide in under-construction buildings or to sleep in the open air, in dumpsites or between trees. According to workers' accounts, the places they sleep have become a sign of their material exposure, which primarily affects their perception of themselves and their dignity. Moreover, they repeatedly mention the extreme cold and filth as well as the lack of water, sleeping and eating on the ground and suffering from insomnia (8).

Although they talked about the fear that pervades their daily life in addition to the risks and difficult conditions of working in the 1948 territories, many workers still insist that their condition is better in Israel. It is clear that their evaluation and criterion for what is 'better' is simply the wage that they earn from their work in Israeli establishments. Therefore, workers come to view themselves as nothing more than a labour power solely evaluated by a wage in return for exerted effort. For this reason, it is not a coincidence that, after making statements like "working in Israel is better," you would hear them saying that "I am obliged" to do so and so (e.g., "I am obliged to do that," "what can I do?" "I do not have an alternative," "there is no other solution," etc.), accompanied with the words "our condition in Israel is better" (Bontemps, 2011:9). This is a clear indication of the lack of horizon in the lives of Palestinian workers and the coercive work environment that derives its legal cover from capitalist exploitation and colonialist plunder, domination and hegemony, and this is what leads workers to combine the abovementioned contradictory statements. In such cases, it is difficult to address the workers' health, the health of individuals and society, prevention from disease and warnings against deadly pandemics. This is because workers take risks on a daily basis, whether while crossing checkpoints, at the workplace or in their overnight stays, whereas this daily risk is taken to avoid the risk of poverty and starvation, a situation in which the settler-colonial, imperial and local powers are complicit.

'Surplus Lives'

The pandemic helped expose many previously hidden and marginalised issues in the colonised and subjugated situation in Palestine. Although the smuggling of workers in vehicle tanks and trunks was an ongoing practice before and after Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Men in the Sun*, the panic caused by the pandemic in Palestine prompted those who live under the illusion of 'state and sovereignty' in cooperation with the Palestinian media to highlight this practice after the smuggling of workers became a 'health risk'. And although most of these workers do not die in a manner similar to the men in Kanafani's story, they do in fact feel a sense of death in every inspection that lasts for hours while in containers (Kav LaOved, 2012: 35). These

workers may knock on the walls of the containers asking to be removed. And even though dead workers will not be thrown into a dumpster, the workers are taken back to the West Bank only to later perform other self-smuggling attempts inside truck containers in an endless repetition of this scene.

Most Palestinian laborers in the 1948 territories work in construction, agricultural and industrial sectors. These sectors are considered vital; hence, they were not closed down. The Israeli government allowed these workers to access their workplaces, provided that they stay there for a whole month, with prior coordination with their employers to secure accommodation and 'suitable' health conditions. However, there is no guarantee of the implementation of these conditions and there is no party that oversees its implementation. Therefore, Palestinian workers found themselves before two options: either to leave their work and stay home without a stable source of income or to risk their lives and health in pursuit of jobs under difficult conditions and away from their families.

In fact, tens of thousands of Palestinian workers went back to their villages. But more than 25,000 workers remained inside the Green Line during the period of total closure which coincided with the Israeli holidays (MAS, 2020: 15).

Palestinian workers were the object of a lot of anger and criticism and were considered the 'source' of the pandemic in the West Bank. However, this was done without examining the state of dependency and subservience of the Palestinian economy, in which Palestinian labour beyond the Green Line constitutes an essential component. According to statistics issued by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), the number of Palestinian workers in Israeli establishments reached 133,000 at the end of 2019, with 23,000 workers in Israeli settlements and 110,000 beyond the Green Line. These workers constitute 13% of all Palestinian workers and 19% of West Bank workers. According to the same statistical source, 71% of these workers have valid work permits, whereas 21% of them work without permits and are obliged to stay in the 1948 territories. Palestinian workers' remittances account for 25% of the total wages received by Palestinian workers, i.e., double the relative size of all workers. These remittances constitute 14% of the Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP). However, due to the pandemic, more than 70,000 workers lost their jobs beyond the Green Line, either due to the closure of their work facilities, by choosing not to go to work, or as a result of the closure of checkpoints and not being allowed entry into 1948 lands (16).

At the end of April 2020, the Israeli government announced that it would allow more than 50,000 Palestinian workers to return to their workplaces in the 1948 territories to bridge the gaps in construction and other sectors. However, this was done without the amendment of health-related procedures and the ensuring of workers' accommodation (16).

The return of Palestinian laborers to their work and the subordination of the PA's decisions to those of the occupation clearly indicate the primacy and domination of Israeli economic interests over the Palestinian economy. And although there was no criticism of this state of dependency and subjugation—whether in the Palestinian official discourse or among the educated elites of Ramallah—the workers were being accused of spreading the disease. Moreover, they were referred to as the 'weak' or 'exposed' flank of the Palestinians and were blamed for endangering people's lives, whereas nobody held the occupation accountable (Al'Sanah and Ziadah, 2020).

According to a report issued by *Haaretz*, despite the directives of the Israeli Ministry of Health regarding the arrangement of Palestinian workers' accommodations (including daily temperature checks and limiting the number of workers to four people per room), Palestinian workers in agricultural and industrial sectors suffered from hazardous and inappropriate sleeping conditions. For example, in the Atarot slaughterhouse, 15-20 workers were sleeping in the same room and a significant number of them were infected with Covid-19. In another case, an agricultural worker stated that he had been told to sleep in a tent. Meanwhile, none of the Israeli ministries bore any responsibility towards protecting the Palestinian workers and ensuring healthy work conditions, including the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, which is supposedly the responsible party for protecting workers and their health. According to the Occupation's Ministry of Health directives vis-à-vis the workers' accommodation, employers are required to provide health insurance to laborers before admitting them. However, no approval was given regarding any insurance coverage for workers until the end of the pandemic. Consequently, thousands of Palestinian workers found themselves staying there without health insurance. Moreover, the checkpoints that were set up at the entrance of West Bank cities and villages—which were putting workers in quarantine—became obstacles that prevented many workers from returning to their homes.

The report also indicates the difficulties faced by workers in returning to their West Bank villages and cities. For example, some workers were threatened that, if they returned to their West Bank homes, their work permits would be cancelled. The

report also mentioned that many workers did not want to return to their homes to avoid passing through Palestinian checkpoints at the entrance of villages and cities adjacent to the workers' entries and exits to the 1948 territories (Shezaf, 2020). These checkpoints—where the workers are carefully inspected, 'sterilised', and put on quarantine—have become sites for stigmatising the workers as 'carriers' of the pandemic.

The situation of Palestinian workers is not completely exceptional. It is in some ways similar to that of migrant workers in different parts of the world. Apart from the Israeli settler-colonial project that aims to annex the remaining part of Palestinian land not in its posession and uproot its people, the logic of a modern nation-state is based on capitalist production relations and the idea of having a 'nation' whose definition is based on excluding the other. This means that every incoming migrant worker is automatically excluded as a cheap, exploitable and disposable labour force. This logic is not much different from settler-colonial logic except in the degree and intensity of the exclusion.[1]

Countries that export these workers as cheap labour have a relationship of dependency and subordination with the host country both economically and politically. However, these relations involve politically recognised states where the weak country voluntarily enters into economic dependency with the strong, exploitative country. But even in the Palestinian case, we were given some kind of a state for our exploitation to be acceptable at the level of the capitalist world of nation-states; and we must be 'grateful' for the development that encompasses this exploitation.

It could be said that the labour policies and logic of the PA are similar to those practiced by modern states. As described by Rose, such policies no longer deal with the body of its citizens as a collective and they do not assume the duty of solving society's health needs (since the health and vitality of the nation, people and race are no longer the motive behind the coercive interventions in individuals' lives). The image today is that of the empowering, facilitating and activating state (Rose 2006). Rather, what is being tackled today is the risk or potential risk of the spread of the pandemic, which came to be associated with the poor, laborers and immigrants by the elites and wealthy classes in its earlier stages.

As indicated in a report on U.S. commercial stores and restaurants, the workers' poor conditions in terms of limited workspace while coming into contact with countless customers—not to mention their long work hours—made them especially vulnerable to Covid-19 despite that most of them belong to younger age demographics. These workers cannot work from home as in the case of middle-class employees. In a country like the United States, where class is also related to race, most of the workers in low-status and dangerous jobs that carry a risk of diseases and injuries are immigrants or of immigrant origins—especially Latin Americans, who work in construction, services, production, maintenance and other sectors. After them come Black Americans followed by whites, then Asian Americans (most Asian Americans are employed in more sophisticated jobs, but they are not necessarily less exploitative). This division of labour in the United States could be seen as a miniature version of the division of international labour (Romano 2020).

Meat plants in the United States and Britain are a great example of how the pandemic can 'team up' with class inequality in exploiting and draining workers. In these farms, workers are considered cheap lives that do not need protection and are exempt from the preventive measures reserved for citizens. In fact, the pandemic succeeded in exposing false claims of democracy and universal citizenship. This is because the 'model citizen' and the 'actual citizen' have not changed much since the start of the capitalist transformation in the west: the individual bourgeois who own private property.

What the pandemic does is a process of filtering (so to speak) of those whose lives do not matter, and this filtering takes place under the heading 'essential workers' (although this category also includes doctors and police officers). However, the use of the word 'essential' in the case of blue-collar workers indicates coerciveness and compulsion in the work instead of referring to the essential work's value.

For example, 'essential work' in the United States had nothing to do with the provision of basic commodities that the American people would need to survive. Rather, it is more related to commercial interests and international exchange (Dalton 2020) and those who work in the factories depend on their labour force (such as manufacturing products for exports) to earn a livelihood. This means that their biological existence is confined to being a labour force used as a commodity sold in the market. In the event of a pandemic, this 'labour force' becomes a condition for their ability to continue working, but it also represents an ongoing and constant threat to their lives.

In meat plants, poor working conditions such as the lack of space, crowdedness and cold temperatures increase the possibility of being infected with the virus. This led to the infection of thousands of workers in the United States and Europe. The attempt to conceal the spread of the pandemic among meat farm workers means prioritising economic interests at the expense of the health of workers and marginalised groups,

such as keeping employees in an operational mode. This was also done for concern about the reputation of their factory or farm. In such cases, the value of the produced commodity becomes higher than the value of the commodity that produces it. For example, there was more concern about the transmission of the disease to the meat than the infection and/or death of hundreds of workers (Knapton 2020). Despite all the talk about the pandemic being a threat to the capitalist system, capitalist principles that posit the market and the demand for cheap commodities defined the treatment of factory workers in a manner that does not see them as biological creatures but solely as a labour power.

It seems as if the pandemic took us back to the time when Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital* (The Capital), where the existence of a worker is limited to his labour power, whereas this labour power is considered a commodity many times cheaper than other production forces (such as machinery and animals) and where the human workforce is always available and easily disposable. Marx explained in his book that, in capitalism, efficient production and capital accumulation are achieved through extraction of the maximum extent of 'labour power' from the worker by extending his work time and speeding the work up, regardless of whether this would shorten his lifespan as a result.

As shown in the previous examples, the overwhelming majority of workers who were being depleted as 'surplus' labour—or who were disposable and replaceable—were immigrants, the colonised or people of colour in an ugly intersection between class, racial oppression and colonialist oppression. The pandemic shed light on this intersection of oppression but it seems to naturalise and consolidate them instead of eliminating their foundations. For example, Germany's factory workers are mainly migrants from East Europe willing to accept poor working conditions and low wages. It is worth noting that the pandemic added new layers to the already-poor working conditions, which includes coldness, crowdedness, overwhelmingly speedy delivery requirements, insufficient and unsafe accommodations and long work hours (*The Guardian* 2020). The biological ramifications in the case of East European workers in Germany are similar to those related to Palestinian workers beyond the Green Line in the sense that these workers are seen merely as a 'labour power' and are not considered to have a biological existence except that of being a commodity. Productivity and additional profits require an increased number of workers and a higher speed of delivery in a way that does not allow for the implementation of healthy work conditions given to those who enjoy the status of citizens (*The Guardian* 2020) who can exercise their role in maintaining social distancing and preventing the spread of the disease.

In a report written by Laughland and Holpuch for *The Guardian*, a link is seen between the state of exception and cases of emergency, which allow for transforming individual or 'personal' cases (according to the liberal definition) into national security issues and capitalistic economic interests. For example, although some U.S. meat plants were closed because of the Covid-19 outbreak, President Trump ordered them to re-open by declaring that meat production is a 'defence production' process, meaning that meat plants must remain in operation at all times during the pandemic since their work is related to national security (Laughland and Holpuch 2020).

Although the current form of labour is paid free labour, it began taking the character of forced labour in the global capitalist era of colonialism and racism while also taking the trait of 'primitive accumulation' (Ince 2018: 7). This includes the use of judicial and political forces in a manner not limited to economic matters. The aforementioned power can employ illegal and extrajudicial means, but leads to the establishment of new legalised forms of exploitation (12). In northern countries, the form of coercion adopted by capitalism is based on tying the worker, his livelihood and the ability to 'reproduce' himself with his wage, hence he remains tied to the market and its processes. As in the case of colonised and migrant workers, contemporary capitalism can perform its processes of appropriation and plunder without having to integrate those exploited because of the abundant numbers of people worldwide who do not belong to the reserve army of labour and who live in the exiles of capital (26). This allows transforming substantial numbers of people into a 'surplus', making them replaceable and disposable commodities. This means that these groups do not even enjoy the status of belonging to the reserve army of labour, but at the same time their status allows for the reproduction of different exploitable groups of people.

Considered a threat to everyone, the Covid-19 pandemic was expected to equalise people. However, it has done quite the opposite on the ground. The problem does not only lie, as Albert Camus has said, in that no one wants equality in death, but that there is no equality even in death. The last six months have showed that even though the virus was transmitted by the high class and capitalist elites, the poor and the downtrodden eventually bear its brunt, just as with the other woes of capitalism. For the poor, the pandemic has deprived them of the scarce resources available to them, leaving them with three options: starvation, disease or both.

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Endnotes

1 See the following report as an example: Svi Bar'el, "Foreign Workers, Rich and Poor, Sent Packing from Gulf States Over Coronavirus Crisis," 25 June 2020, https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-foreign-workers-rich-and-poor-sent-packing-from-gulf-over-coronavirus-crisis-1.8947666

Not Our Country: On Palestinian Imaginaries for Liberation

Hashem Abushama

Introduction

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many analysts have highlighted its disproportionate impact on historically oppressed communities. They argue, and rightfully so, that the pandemic has highlighted the infrastructural and structural inequalities embedded in the global systems of heteropatriarchal, racial, neoliberal and neocolonial capitalism. In the United States, for example, Black Americans are dying at 2.3 times the rate of white Americans (73.7 deaths per 100,000 in comparison to 32.4 deaths per 100,000)[1] while the rate amongst Indigenous communities is 1.86 times that of white Americans (60.5 per 100,000 deaths). Similarly, in England, the death rate is the highest amongst Black communities, who constitute around 6% of the overall deaths, which is quite disproportionate when taking into account their demographic percentage of 3% of the overall population.[2] The distribution of health facilities and services, the organisation of urban spaces and places, the systematic vulnerability to diseases (which is the by-product of decades of economic and political neglect and marginalisation) and the racialised and gendered nature of the division of labour (whereby communities of colour are pushed into frontline work) undoubtedly contribute to the production of this disparity.

In Palestine, the pandemic has also further exposed the structural hierarchies imposed by a settler-colonial order. The systematic, geographic fragmentation of Palestinian livelihood in historic Palestine is enabled by mechanisms of enclosure, blockade and surveillance that has ironically made the imposition of immobility to control the pandemic more possible. This is particularly true in the case of the Gaza Strip, where only 80 cases and one death have been recorded so far up to the end of July 2020, leading many to argue, in dark humour, that Gaza is the 'safest' place in the world from the virus.[3] We should be careful, however, not to characterise the blockade on Gaza and the systematic inequalities that it entails as 'safe', particularly in the health sector. Not only does the blockade cause "shortages in specialized health staff, drugs and equipment, compounded by electricity cuts impacting hospitals,"[4] but it also imposes a systematic deterioration of the general health of the population in its intensification of poverty, its calculation of the calories necessary to keep the population just alive and its continuous maiming and killing of Palestinian bodies.[5]

For Palestinians carrying an Israeli passport and living within the so-called Green Line (1949 Armistice Line), the situation is different. The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was quick to ask the 'Arabic-speaking public' to comply with the government's instructions, alleging that there was a lack of compliance from the Palestinians.[6] As the Haifa-based Palestinian paediatrician, Osama Tannous, notes, no such concerns were expressed about certain Jewish communities within Israel, particularly the Orthodox Jewish communities.[7] Furthermore, there was a lack of circulation of information in Arabic about the virus.[8] There is an even more severe lack of mapping and registering cases in majority Palestinian cities, which has been taken by some Israeli analysts to quickly conclude that Palestinian-majority areas have a low infection rate.[9] Meanwhile, the Israeli press was celebrating Palestinian health workers at the forefront of the Israeli health care system's fight against the coronavirus. While Palestinians make up one fifth of the population within the Green Line, they represent half of the pharmacists, a quarter of the nurses, and nearly a fifth of the doctors within the Israeli health care system.[10] This disproportionate representation happens against the backdrop of Israeli exclusionary policies and not because of the façade of inclusion that the Israeli press celebrates. As Tannous notes, "The presence of Palestinian doctors working in Israeli hospitals has been a constant theme in celebrations of these institutions and of the state as a haven of democracy, equality and multicultural coexistence."[11] So, while the Israeli establishment is quick to portray Palestinian bodies as carriers of the virus and to systematically neglect their presence, they are just as quick to portray Palestinian efforts and contributions as 'exceptional' and to whitewash the settler state and further disguise its racial hierarchies.[12]

In the West Bank, the ability to control the virus is more complex, given the presence of illegal Israeli colonies, the Israeli army and the flow of Palestinian workers across the so-called Green Line. The response of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the West Bank was initially quick and measured and was received positively by the World Health Organization and Palestinians in the West Bank. It did not take long, however, for the virus to expose the PNA's dependency on Israel as well as its inability to act beyond the status quo. After the first month of the lockdown, the Israeli authorities, in coordination with Palestinian officials, allowed for some 14,500 Palestinian workers to cross the checkpoints between the West Bank and Israel. The jobs were mostly in agriculture, construction and industrial plants. The agreement stipulated the provisions of protective gear and housing for the workers by Israeli employers. Soon thereafter, it emerged that the housing conditions of the Palestinian workers were inhumane, being compared as worse than the conditions of foreign workers.[13] A few days into the agreement, Israeli employers began to drop off Palestinian workers who exhibited COVID-19 symptoms at the checkpoints.[14] The PNA responded by urging all Palestinian workers to return to the West Bank.

labour in relation to the settler state can open the possibility of a politics of liberation. The first section starts from the premise that there is a fundamental antagonism towards Palestinians by the settler-colonial state that defines its hierarchal order. This systemic antagonism constitutes Palestinian bodies as disposable, sick, deserving of death and undeserving of life. Then, I briefly explore the relationship between settler colonialism and Palestinian labour. Much of the literature on settler colonialism relegates labour to a secondary status: while colonialism is about the extraction of surplus value, scholars argue, settler colonialism is about seizing the land and eliminating the 'Indigenous' population. Therefore, the labour of the Palestinians is disposable to the settler state. If this is true, why is it, then, that the Israeli state would allow Palestinian workers to enter its constantly expanding frontiers in the midst of a global pandemic?

The second section begins from a different premise: there is a lack of a political grammar to sketch out alternative Palestinian imaginaries of liberation. This dearth of Palestinian political imaginaries is the result of a necessary but limiting one-sided focus on Israeli mechanisms of control, management and elimination combined

with the forced reduction of the Palestinian liberation movement(s) into a nation-state building project. In many accounts, including of the Palestinian labourers inside Israel, the settler state is presumed to be a proper site of appeal and demand for Palestinian rights, when in reality the settler state is based on a fundamental antagonism that systematically aims to annihilate the Palestinian, rendering any articulation of our subjectivity within its apparatus impossible. In light of this, how can we articulate a subjectivity and presence that moves not only beyond a demand of recognition by the settler state but also centralises Palestinian modes of living and the continuous struggles and resistance against the settler colonial order?

The pandemic's foregrounding of longstanding structural inequalities, not only in Palestine but globally, may be an apt agitating site and moment to start building this political grammar. I want to think here along the political and theoretical interventions from activists and scholars from the Black and Indigenous communities in the United States to pose questions about the pathway to a future whereby the conditions under which the constant and systematic elimination and disposability of Palestinian bodies on the streets, at the checkpoints, in the prison, at the workplace, in the refugee camps and at the borders is no longer justified and naturalised.

Israeli Settler Colonialism and Palestinian Labour

Settler colonialism is defined most strikingly by its intent on eliminating the native. Its main goal is to empty the land—both literally and discursively—in order to redefine it. Elimination here does not strictly mean the "summary liquidation of Indigenous people,"[15] but the wide variety of strategies used by the settler colony to exterminate Indigenous presence, including assimilation. This is why Patrick Wolfe's poignant formulation of the settler colony as a structure constantly seeking permanence is accurate. Settler colonialism is not a one-time event of invasion, but a constant, structural invasion dependent on outward and inward frontier expansion as well as modes of subjectification targeted at Indigenous bodies and minds. As Wolfe poignantly puts it, ". . . settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event."[16] Wolfe further explains that the structural nature of settler colonialism is expressed both by its complex social formation as well as its continuity through time.

Israeli settlers' expansion into the West Bank and the current looming threat of annexation, particularly intensified during the pandemic, is an extension of a "tired and tested Zionist strategy—Israel's 1949 campaign to seize the Negev before the impending armistice was codenamed Udva, Hebrew for 'fact.'"[17] The settlements in the West Bank are not an exceptional and unnatural feature of the settler-colonial state, extending a state sovereignty over 'other people's territory'. Rather, they are a structural continuation of a regime of elimination and expansion that constantly produces frontiers. While for many nation-states, the frontier is the national boundary, the frontier for Israel, as Wolfe argues, is simultaneously a "national boundary" and a "mobile index of expansion." This index surely points outwards, beyond the so-called Green Line, but it also points inwards: to the Palestinians living in Israel and the remaining houses and lands that signify a Palestinian presence pre-1948.[18]

This formulation of the settler-colonial project has the generative potential of producing rigorous explications of the complex logics of control and management in historic Palestine. While it highlights the seminal role of mass expulsion of the Palestinians, it recognises the structural continuity of this logic of expulsion and how it negates Palestinian subjectivity. It also recognises the elasticity of the settler-colonial legal paradigm: it constantly expands and justifies its expansion. Seen this way, the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 (and one here is forced to periodise Palestinian history according to events of mass invasion) are not a 'space of exception', where the law is suspended; they are the norm. It is the law of the settler colony to point to new frontiers, eliminate, occupy and then legislate.[19]

We should be mindful here that this framework allows us to reconsider the casual and normalised submission within certain academic literature to settler-colonial fragmentation of Palestinian geography (Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and *al-shatat* [diaspora]) in our analyses. As Salamanca, Qato, Rabie and Samour (2012) remind us, the Green Line "has become a powerful symbolic and material signifier that enforces, and takes for granted, the fragmentation of the Palestinian polity. With a few exceptions." The authors warn us, "it is a line that is rarely crossed in scholarly accounts of Palestine—in either direction."[20] It then becomes clear that the fragmentation of Palestinian polity, and the use of *comparison* as an analytical lens of the living conditions of Palestinians under settler colonialism in their different locations, may—even if unintentionally—align with the settler-colonial agenda by taking its specific modalities of control and management as the target of analysis, rather than its whole structure of elimination that works to disguise its true nature. *We do not merely walk the map as it has been drawn for us.* Therefore, the focus should be on relationality: a mode of analysis

that purposefully brings these fragmented geographies in relation to one another in order to explicate, indeed defy, settler-colonial logics *and* to articulate Palestinian embodied experiences as well as new visions for liberation.[21]

So, it is the logic of elimination under settler colonialism that sets it apart from other forms of colonialism. Audra Simpson argues that, "unlike other colonialisms, it is not labor but territory that [settler colonialism] seeks. Because 'Indigenous' people are tied to the desired territories, they must be 'eliminated.'"[22] In Wolfe's formulation, labour also takes a secondary position to the land. He says the ". . . settler colonies were not primarily established to extract surplus value from indigenous labor. Rather, they are premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land."[23] More succinctly, he states, "In this respect, settler colonies' relative immunity to the withdrawal of native labor is highly significant."[24] He argues that the Zionist project has increasingly tried to dispense itself of the reliance on Palestinian labour. As Gershon Shafir demonstrates, "the core doctrine of the conquest of labor, which produced the Kibbutzim and Histadrut, central institutions of the Israeli state, emerged out of the local confrontation with Arab Palestinians in a form fundamentally different from the pristine doctrine of productivization that had originally been coined in Europe."[25] Farsakh also notes that, "one of the main factors that prevented Israel from undergoing a South African Apartheid or a Zimbabwean colonial experience was its reliance on an economic structure that refused to rely on indigenous labor."[26] Nevertheless, Israeli capital exploited, within the limits of the Zionist logic, the maximum Palestinian labour directly and indirectly.

While this is true, we should not dismiss the regulatory and constitutive roles played by labour within the Palestinian context, which have been all but disguised under the current reality of a global pandemic. The settler state has simultaneously worked to minimise dependency on Palestinian labour while ensuring the reverse—the dependency of Palestinians on the settler-colonial paradigm in order to ensure Israeli economic and territorial domination.[27] Therefore, while the extracting of surplus labour from Palestinians is not a defining feature of settler colonialism, it should not be relegated a secondary status, as that risks overlooking the constitutive role played by labour in building the settler-colonial state and its central role—until today—in subjugating and neutralising Palestinian subjects.

This, perhaps, explains the conundrum of seeking cheap Palestinian labour in the midst of a global pandemic. Inside Israel, Palestinian laborers are systematically excluded from any legal protections, let alone labour unions. This is also a result of the workings of a settler-colonial structure and not the specificities of the pandemic crisis: Israel's main labour federation, Histradut, emerged before 1948 from a confrontation with Palestinian labour with the goal of establishing a structural racial hierarchy that, until today, continues to organise the divisions of labour along colonial and racial contours that exclude Palestinian laborers even from the most basic protections afforded to foreign workers. Palestinian workers inside the Green Line and in the settlements, as Ross notes, suffer from "wage theft, unsafe workplaces, middleman fees, and employer delinquency over social insurance contributions."[28] Palestinian workers, both working with permits from Israeli authorities and working without permits, are chased at checkpoints and entry points, attacked with tear gas and sometimes rubber and live bullets, humiliated in the workplace and held captive by the Israeli bureaucratic and legal processes from obtaining the permit to return home at the end of their day, or week, or month of work.[29]

In the midst of the pandemic, as soon as the workers were allowed to cross the Green Line for work, Israeli employers started dropping off workers with coronavirus-like symptoms at the checkpoints, violating yet another supposed bilateral agreement.[30] This happened while Israeli firms and health institutes were vigorously marketing their high-tech products for surveillance and control and their proximity to finding a vaccine, which we are yet to see. What is marketed are not only the products but also a supposed 'inert' ability of the settler to be civilised, prepared, able to produce vaccines and capable of solving global crises.[31] What this fails to show is the systemic processes of exploitation and theft of Palestinian resources and bodies. The settler's mythical and relentlessly manufactured pride—so regulative in the settler colony—reaches one of its peaks in this formulation, showing simultaneously the sense of ethno-religious settler supremacy engrained within the state apparatus *and* the sense of contempt and disdain for the Palestinian body.

Quickly thereafter, the PNA asked the workers to return to their homes, warning the public that the workers might become the main transmitters of the virus. This created a public image, even within Palestinian society, of the worker's body as sickly, likely to transmit the disease. The PNA faced a real conundrum here: between allowing the workers in the Green Line to earn the incomes that form a cornerstone of the Palestinian Gross Domestic Product or preventing the virus from spreading lest the PNA's institutions and what remains of its legitimacy become threatened. This is not only the result of Israeli policies but also of the PNA's reliance on, and puzzling faith in, agreements that were created only to be violated by Israel. It is also indicative

of the limited role of the PNA as an intermediary of Israeli policies. Even after the PNA's decision in February to suspend their relations with Israel because of its constant violation of the signed agreements and its looming threat of annexing parts of the West Bank,[32] the Authority still remains in a reactive position that cannot move beyond the status quo, for its whole apparatus hinges upon the parameters dictated by the so-called Oslo Agreement. These parameters were created to ensure the subservience of the PNA to the settler state's agenda, both economically and politically.

Thus, the Palestinian worker was allowed to work insofar as they do not represent a threat first to the security apparatus and now to the 'pure' and 'healthy' Israeli body. Not only are the workers deemed a security threat needing to perpetually prove their innocence—and always failing to do so, because their mere existence under this paradigm is deemed a threat—they are now pathologized. The Palestinian body is terrorist. The Palestinian body is sick. The Palestinian body is a threat. The Palestinian body is unworthy of protection or life.

Not Our Country

> *Not so much the abolition of prisons but the abolition of a society that could have prisons, that could have slavery, that could have the wage, and therefore not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society.* –Stefano Harney and Fred Moten[33]

In a recent book titled *Stone Men: The Palestinians Who Built Israel*, Andrew Ross offers a comprehensive account of the experiences of Palestinian workers inside Israel and in the settlements. Towards the end of the book, he argues that the systematic theft of Palestinian labour by the settler state should be included in final status negotiations not only as a ground for monetary compensation but also for recognition rights. In an earlier article, Ross argues that "the overall worth of Palestinians' aggregate labor contribution to the assets encompassed by the state justifies a claim to territorial sovereignty, full political rights, and citizenship."[34] His account aims to sketch a politics of liberation that advocates for the use of aggregate labour contribution as grounds on which the full inclusion and recognition of Palestinians in a unitary state is possible. He quotes a Palestinian worker as saying: "I've been building homes every day over there for 30 years. In a way, it's really my country too, isn't it?"[35]

Well, in fact, it is *not our country,* at least in the sense evoked here. Palestinian land is systematically stolen, since the late years of the 19th century until today, in an invasion that has not ended. With the theft of land came the establishment of institutions and structures that reinforce settler, racial, gender- and class-based hierarchies as well as the formation of settler subjectivities (how they come to see the world and themselves in the world). These technologies of power emerge in a direct negation of Palestinian land, subjectivity and history. Their main purpose, since inception, has been to exclude the Palestinian and enshrine settler supremacy within the land of historic Palestine.

Ross is aware of this, as he points out in his book that "a properly decolonial outcome cannot ignore the pattern of plunder that began in 1948 and has not yet run its course."[36] I want to go further by arguing that a decolonial approach to the conundrum of Palestinian labour specifically, and Palestinian liberation in general, cannot conceivably take the settler state as a site of appeal. In other words, we cannot ask a state that has been systematically built to annihilate and exclude us to recognise our rights, for that recognition becomes a technology of enclosure, neutralisation and annihilation. As Tantour points out, "multicultural recognition is part of a wider liberal politics of distraction, a 'colonizing process of being kept busy by the colonizer, of always being on the 'back-foot', 'responding', 'engaging', 'accounting', 'following' and 'explaining'. It produces an 'illusion of exclusion….'" This demand for rights from the settler state reformulates "invasion and occupation as exclusion."[37] It presumes that the Palestinian relation to the settler state is one of exclusion from its paradigms and not one of systematic annihilation and elimination. As Indigenous scholar Mark Rifkin warns, this formulation transposes the settler-colonial denial of Palestinian rights into a discourse of racial exclusion that ends up reifying and legitimising settler sovereignty over the land.[38] Recognition by the settler state—in today's North America, Australia, New Zealand, Israel and elsewhere—only serves to tighten its hegemony.

Instead of being a site of appeal for recognition rights, the settler state must be our site of *interrogation* with the eventual aim of abolition. This is an apt moment to open the potentialities of abolition frameworks in imagining the liberation of Palestine. With the re-eruption of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States to address police brutality and the exposure of the entrenched inequalities by a global pandemic, we are witnessing the inspiring mobilisation of abolitionist thought at an unprecedented level. The Black Lives Matter movement has demonstrated

a committed stance against settler colonialism in Palestine since the beginning.[39] There are many accounts that historicise these expressions of solidarity and provide empirical evidence to ground them in a longer, shared struggle for liberation.[40] These accounts remain empirical, however, and risk validating some sceptics' claims that "the Black-Palestinian activism [is] nothing more than an excuse for anti-Black appropriation."[41] As Burris aptly notes, "as important as it may be to document new instances of solidarity—another rap song, another YouTube video, another protest spectacle—we must also seek to take our analysis underground and to ask how the traditions of Black radicalism and Palestinian liberation can speak to each other at the level of theory, philosophy and epistemology."[42]

Abolition entails the founding a new society—both people and institutions—that refuses all kinds of "power difference combinations . . . Abolition is a totality and it is ontological."[43] Within the U.S. context, abolition is often reduced to the abolition of prisons and the police. However, abolition does not mean the mere elimination of the prison institution per se, but the elimination of the conditions under which the prison makes sense. As Harney and Moten put it, "Not so much the abolition of prisons but the abolition of a society that could have prisons . . . and therefore not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society."[44]

Within the Palestinian context and regarding the issue at hand, we could say: not so much the abolition of inhumane work conditions imposed by the settler state on Palestinian laborers, but the abolition of a reality under which such dependency makes sense. Not so much the restitution of Palestinian rights through monetary compensation and recognition rights, but the elimination of the conditions under which the systematic theft of Palestinian labour and land has been justified. The aim should neither be the inclusion within a state apparatus that was created to exclude us, nor the partition of the land along racial and ethnoreligious hierarchies. Perhaps, the aim should be to abolish the settler institutions, hierarchies and ways of being as well as the ways in which they condition and limit our political subjectivities in order to found a new society.

Sceptics of such liberatory frameworks may propose that they are too unpragmatic, to which the abolitionist response may be that pragmatism is a settler paradigm that aims to always keep us busy with its legal frameworks and distracted from articulating our own visions for liberation. The Oslo Peace Agreement and its consequences on the Palestinian communities and our collective vision for liberation is the result of reductive, seemingly pragmatic analysis that took the ethnoreligious, racial partition of the land as a proper framework of liberation. The Agreement—dubbed by Edward Said as an "instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles"[45]—reduced the Palestinian liberation struggle into a struggle for nation-state building on a fraction of historic Palestine! The result, as many have argued, has not only been more theft of land by the settler state, but also the establishment of Palestinian state institutions that have managed to reify and intensify class stratification within Palestinian society that have: failed to provide a basic social welfare system for Palestinian citizens by the deployment of neoliberal policies that prioritise capital over people; failed to respond to gender-based violence in Palestine, particularly femicide, which has significantly increased during the pandemic; and have reductively redefined the 'international community' to mean the United Nations institutions and official governments instead of the anti-authoritarian, anti-racist and anti-colonial movements that constitute natural allies for the Palestinian people.

Another response would be that even after the Oslo Agreement and its relentless intent on capitulating Palestinian resistance to settler colonialism, there are still acts of insurgency against, resistance to and refusal of the settler paradigm everywhere within the land of historic Palestine and *al-shatat*. Some of these acts are direct confrontations with the paradigm, while others are indirect and enacted on a day-to-day basis. They happen against the backdrop of the Oslo Agreement. For example, the increasing reciprocity of cultural identities and ideas and the overall linkage between Ramallah and Haifa as de facto Palestinian cultural capitals, despite their connection to neoliberal, capital-fuelled urban expansion and class stratification in both cities, refuses and defies settler-colonial geographies. The smuggling of Palestinian prisoners' writings, novels, letters and sperm from Israeli prisons challenges the cornerstone of the Israeli high-tech surveillance systems. The attempts to narrate and write down Palestinian histories that have been systematically erased refuses the settler state's attempt to discursively eliminate our presence. The protests for the right of return at all of the settler state's frontiers refuse the systematic denial of Palestinian refugee rights. These surely do not constitute a response sufficient to establishing a new order, but they already point towards refusal[46] of the settler-state paradigm and its abolition. *We do not simply walk the map as it has been drawn for us.* The issue is not one of lack of imaginaries, for they are already among us; it is one of finding the political grammar necessary to amplify them.

This is why I admittedly end with more questions than answers. In a post-pandemic world, will it not be more necessary than ever before to raise these questions, to refuse to accept the world as it has been given to us and to reject that our struggles, histories, stories and visions of liberation be reduced to frameworks that can promise nothing more than more enclosure, more annihilation, and more death? How can we move away from "being kept busy with the coloniser" and yet another stillborn conversation "between the sword and the neck"[47] as Kanafani put it decades ago? How do we start articulating the Palestinian presences that continue to defy settler colonialism in its different manifestations, even after the Oslo Agreement? How can we create an intersectional framework that goes beyond the political realities of settler colonialism that addresses the social ills within Palestinian society, including gender-based violence, tribal territoriality, anti-Blackness and class stratification? These ills are the result of historical processes and must be addressed as such. And finally, how can we amplify and articulate the political imaginaries already present amongst us? Perhaps, our role as scholars, students, artists and cultural practitioners should be to reckon with these questions and to find the political grammar to articulate their responses.

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Endnotes

1 The rate is even higher when the factors are age adjusted. See https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race.

2 Office for National Statistics, "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Related Deaths by Ethnic Group, England and Wales: 2 March 2020 to 10 April 2020." https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/coronavirusrelateddeathsbyethnicgroupenglandandwales/2march2020to10april2020#ethnic-group-differences-in-deaths-involving-covid-19-adjusted-for-main-socio-demographic-factors.

3 Maha Hussaini, "'The Safest Place in the World': How the Coronavirus Went Viral in Gaza," Middle East Eye, 1 March 2020, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/safest-place-world-how-coronavirus-went-viral-social-media-gaza.

4 World Health Organization, "WHO Thanks Austria Development Cooperation for Contribution to COVID-19 Response," press release, 9 April 2020, http://www.emro.who.int/palestine-press-releases/2020/who-austrian-donation-covid19.html.

5 Ghassan Abu Sitta offers a compelling narrative of the reality of the pandemic in Gaza and situates it within a longer analysis of the 'biopolitical management' of the Strip. See Ghassan Abu Sitta, "The Virus, the Settler and the Siege: Gaza in the Age of Corona," Journal of Palestine Studies, no. 123, Summer 2020 (in Arabic).

6 Osama Tanous, "Coronavirus Outbreak in the Time of Apartheid," Al Jazeera, 24 March 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/coronavirus-outbreak-time-apartheid-200324151937879.html.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Osama Tanous, "A New Episode of Erasure in the Settler Colony," Critical Times blog, 9 April 2020, https://ctjournal.org/2020/04/09/a-new-episode-of-erasure-in-the-settler-colony/.

10 Mehul Srivastava, "The Arab Medics Battling Coronavirus in Israel's Divided Society," Financial Times, 16 April 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/f193a9b9-c3a0-4da2-9a26-be4a92f99006.

11 Tanous, A New Episode of Erasure.

12 An analysis of the spread and control of the virus along colonial and racial lines within the Israeli settler colony is important, but beyond the scope of this article. While the State of Israel is surely built on a fundamental antagonism between the settler and the Palestinian, its mechanisms of racialisation also exclude and otherise Black, Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews as well as Black migrants and refugees. To read more on Arab Jews within Israel, see Ella Shohat, On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings (London: Pluto Books, 2017). See also Yfaat Weiss, A Confiscated Memory: Wadi Salib and Haifa's Lost Heritage (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Weiss offers an interesting analysis of the Wadi Salib riots, which formulated the first large response by Arab Jews to the Israeli state's racism. Weiss, however, fails to properly interrogate the relationality and the difference between the uprooting of the Palestinian from Wadi Salib and the relocating of the Arab Jew (a settler) to the same quarters as integral to the functioning of the settler colony. It would be very telling to take this relational approach to the settler colony, but that should not be at the cost of erasing fundamental differences between the Arab Jewish settler and the local Palestinian.

13 Mayaan Niezna, "Under Control: Palestinian Workers in Israel During COVID-19," Border Criminalities blog, 7 July 2020, https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2020/07/under-control.

14 Rania Zabaneh, "Palestinians Brace for a Coronavirus Outbreak As Workers Return," Al Jazeera, 6 April 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/palestinians-brace-coronavirus-outbreak-workers-return-200406200244263.html.

15 Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," Journal of Genocide Research 8 (no. 4, 2006): p. 388. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240.

16 Ibid, p. 388.

17 Ibid, p. 393.

18 Here, I am referring to the continuous relegation of Palestinians living inside Israel to the status of second-class citizens as well as the Israeli state's incomplete yet relentless project of erasing indicators of a Palestinian presence pre-1948. These two often go hand in hand through legal decrees, urban planning and citizenship provisions (for example, the Nation-State Law), among other things. On the former, the Palestinian human rights organisation, Adalah, notes that there are 65 Israeli laws that directly exclude Palestinians. For more, see The Discriminatory Laws Database, Adalah, https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771. As noted above, in the midst of the pandemic, Israeli media outlets were condescendingly showcasing Palestinian doctors, nurses and health workers at the frontlines within

the Green Line, as if to argue that their 'productivity' should be grounds for further inclusion in the settler state apparatus and that the settler state is capable of including the local populations. (See Dina Kraft, "Meet the Majdals: An Arab Family of Doctors on Israel's Coronavirus Front Lines," Haaretz, 21 April 2020, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-an-arab-family-of-doctors-on-israel-s-coronavirus-front-lines-1.8786492). This kind of rhetoric begins to show how assimilation as a strategy, works to measure Palestinian subjectivity through criteria imposed by the settler-colonial state and its racial capitalism.

19 Here I am referring to the quick characterisation of Palestinian lands as 'spaces of exception' and of Palestinian livelihoods as bare lives. Giorgio Agamben's thesis that there is a bare life that exists in a space of exception, whereby both divine and humane laws are suspended is compelling and has been taken by many analysts to characterise the realities in Palestine. There was even a conference dedicated to this theme, from which the book Thinking Palestine (ed. Ronit Lentin, 2008) was published. Agamben argues that the original structure of the Western state is to distinguish 'birth' from 'nation' and in that space of distinction there exists the space of exception. However, Agamben fails to interrogate what Alexander Weheliye names the 'racializing assemblages' that collectively produce this difference. Furthermore, given his statist focus, i.e., his focus on the State as the only site of politics, he fails to account for the modes of politics that exist against the backdrop of the State and its apparatus. It is my understanding, therefore, that bare lives are only bare if seen from the state's perspective. For more, see Alexander Weheliye, Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

20 Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie and Sobhi Samour, "Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine." Settler Colonial Studies 2 (no, 1, 2012): p. 3.

21 It may be useful here to mention that there are metaphors and theories that travel from different contexts to be used in explaining the realities in Palestine. This includes settler colonialism, but also apartheid and occupation. They are often used together to describe the realities, although they dramatically differ in their portrayal of the realities. While settler colonialism as a framework interrogates the entire apparatus of the settler state, apartheid reductively frames the Palestinian issue as an intrastate issue—an issue of exclusion from the state apparatus. For more on this, see Mark Rifkin, "Indigeneity, Apartheid, Palestine: On the Transit of Political Metaphors." Cultural Critique 95 (Winter 2017): p. 25, https://doi.org/10.5749/culturalcritique.95.2017.0025. On the same note, I refrain from using 'Indigenous' in this article because using it as a designation might risk imposing analyses and designations that emerged from different historical contexts on the Palestinian reality. This is not to dismiss it as a designation, but to acknowledge that I still struggle with sketching a genealogy of it without risking collapsing differences between Palestine and other Indigenous struggles in the world. With that said, I find Rifkin's formulation that indigeneity is not about designating priorness, but about relationality very helpful. He argues that indigeneity is about "interrogat[ing] the legitimacy of the legal and administrative frameworks of the settler-state while also attending to the presence and contours of actual or aspirational political formations by indigenous peoples" (p. 28).

22 Audra Simpson, Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 19.

23 Patrick Wolfe, Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event (London: Continuum Books, 1999) p. 28.

24 Ibid, p. 2.

25 Productivisation emerged as a response to the self-loathing encouraged in the Eastern European Jewry by the discriminatory exclusions from productive industry. When transferred to Palestine as a modality of self-fashioning and control of the Other, it metamorphised into excluding Palestinian Arab labour from Jewish industry. For more, see Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native."

26 Leila Farsakh, "The Political Economy of Israeli Occupation: What Is Colonial about It?" Electronic Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (no.8, 2008): p. 5.

27 For more, see Leila Farsakh, Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel: Labour, Land and Occupation (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005). See also Gershon Shafir, Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

28 Andrew Ross, "Who Built Zion? Palestinian Labor and the Case for Political Rights," New Labor Forum 27 (no. 3, September 2018): p. 46, https://doi.org/10.1177/1095796018791147.

29 Ibid .

30 See Rania Zabaneh, "Palestinians Brace for a Coronavirus Outbreak as Workers Return." Al Jazeera, 6 April 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/palestinians-brace-coronavirus-outbreak-workers-return-200406200244263.html.

31 The Israeli minister of defence claimed on 5 May 2020 that Israel's defence biological research institute developed a vaccine for the coronavirus. See Times of Israel, "Defense Minister Claims Israel's Biological Institute Developed Virus Antibody," 5 May 2020, https://www.timesofisrael.com/defense-minister-claims-israels-biological-institute-developed-virus-vaccine/. Similarly, the Israeli Intelligence Agency (Mossad) boasted of its ability to obtain ventilators for Israeli citizens. See Michael Brachner, "Mossad Officer Describes Covert Global Battle to Obtain Ventilators at All Costs," Times of Israel, 1 April 2020, https://www.timesofisrael.com/mossad-officer-describes-covert-global-battle-to-obtain-ventilators-at-all-costs/.

32 France 24. "Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas Suspends Relations with the US, Israel," 1 February 2020, https://www.france24.com/en/20200201-palestinian-leader-mahmoud-abbas-suspends-relations-with-the-us-israel.

33 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2013), p. 42.

34 Ross, "Who Built Zion?"

35 Ibid, p. 49.

36 Andrew Ross, Stone Men: The Palestinians Who Built Israel (New York: Verso Books, 2019).

37 Rifkin, "Indigeneity, Apartheid, Palestine."

38 Ibid., p. 33.

39 The New Arab, "Black Lives Matter UK Stands with Palestine Against 'colonialism' as Israel's Illegal Annexation Looms," 29 June 2020, https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/6/29/black-lives-matter-uk-stands-with-palestine-against-colonialism. See also the Journal of Palestine Studies' special issue (no. 192, Summer 2019) on Black-Palestinian transnational solidarity.

40 For an example, see Keith P. Feldman, A Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. See also Angela Davis and Frank Barat, Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

41 For more on this, see Greg Burris, "Birth of a Zionist Nation: Black Radicalism and the Future of Palestine," in Futures of Black Radicalism, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2017). There have been important conversations about Black-Palestinian solidarity over the past few months that also warn against this. Some Black and Palestinian activists have warned against the relativisation of anti-Black violence to anti-Palestinian violence, as if the former should matter insofar as it can help us shed light on the realities in Palestine. They also warn against the appropriation of the Black movement's slogans, messages and mobilisations. A reckoning with Black-Palestinian solidarity at the theoretical and philosophical level must respond to these risks.

42 Ibid, p. 773.

43 Robin D. G. Kelley, "What Is to Be Done?" American Quarterly 63 (no. 2, 2011): p. 268.

44 Stefano and Moten, The Undercommons, p. 42.

45 Edward Said, "The Morning After," London Review of Books, 21 October 1993, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v15/n20/edward-said/the-morning-after.

46 This analysis benefits greatly from Audra Simpson's compelling book Mohawk Interruptus.

47 From an interview by Richard Carleton with Ghassan Kanafani in 1970. For the full interview, see "PFLP Ghassan Kanafani, Richard Carleton interview COMPLETE," YouTube, clip created 14 August 2017, 6:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h_drCmG2iM.

Our Wrecks of the Medusa

A dialogue on Economy, Masculinity and Race Within and Beyond the Pandemic

Phanuel Antwi and Max Haiven

The following dialogue, staged in Vancouver in early October 2020, takes as its point of departure Théodore Géricault's monumental painting *The Raft of the Medusa,* which hangs in the Louvre. First exhibited in 1819, the painting was the result of many months of fanatical work as the artist painstakingly researched and interviewed survivors of a notorious shipwreck in 1816, just after the Napoleonic Wars. In that historical event, the restored Bourbon monarchy sent a convoy of ships to Senegal in the hopes of re-establishing France's role in the transatlantic slave trade. Due to the incompetence of the captain—an aristocratic appointee—the flagship was stranded off the coast of the Sahara and, while the captain and other elites made off with the longboat and supplies, 150 working-class seamen and soldiers, a multi-ethnic mix, were set adrift on a hastily constructed raft. By the time they were rescued 13 days later, only 15 remained alive, having been forced to throw the sick and wounded overboard, surviving mutiny and fighting and resorting to cannibalism.[1] Like many critics in the past, in this conversation, Phanuel Antwi and Max Haiven re-read *The Raft of the Medusa* as an allegory of our own troubled times, when systems of oppression and exploitation seek to turn us against ourselves and reduce humanity to its very worst. And yet we resist.

Masculinities

Phanuel Antwi: In *The Raft of the Medusa*, we see an image of men, all of them workers, labourers of different sorts, on top of each other, touching and in touch with one another. In this pandemic moment, one being identified and being lived as a crisis, we are also experiencing a crisis in gender, specifically a crisis in masculinity. One place this crisis cannot be avoided is on the home front. A crisis is emerging there because men are losing their jobs; men who would otherwise dispense bottled-up energies through their work now find themselves stuck at home, often without a release valve. Many of them are now having to also do service work on the home front. They are not used to doing domestic labour. That's where my brain is, right now, looking at Géricault's *Raft*, thinking about masculinity and its economies within this moment of lockdown entanglement.

Max Haiven: On that note, I was thinking about this painting and the stories of the raft on which it was based, stories in which the refugees began to drink saltwater, bake in the sun and become delusional, leading to lethal fights, to cannibalism. I'm thinking about the ways that, in patriarchies, idled masculinity becomes even more dangerous. Patriarchal worlds keep men busy in some way and, when that busywork ends, dangerous things happen. I don't think this is based on some 'natural' kind of masculinity but on the way that we have socially constructed masculinity. Like the delusions of the idled sailors of the raft, today idled hegemonic masculinities often turn to delusions: conspiracy theories, narcissistic paranoias. These are means, I think, by which men seek to re-empower themselves as 'masters of reality' somehow. But they are proving to be extremely dangerous. This is amplified and weaponised in online spaces that harness alienation and a sense of futility for reactionary causes.

Phanuel: There is a disturbance, a circuit break in the intimacy assembly line of the home front that's producing a crisis—if one wants to call the surfacing of an already-there disturbance a crisis. I think there is—especially if we don't overlook the surfacing of inequity is a non-happening, and it's happening on multiple fronts—not just in the heteronormative household, that market-mediated sphere of caring for children.

Generational shift

Max: I think in a way, this crisis of masculinity comes amidst a generational shift. We're seeing the youngest generation to enter adulthood articulate an increasing scepticism towards the need to obey the expected norms of gender expression and sexuality. On Turtle Island (North America) we are seeing a lot more young people identify with fluid forms of gender, identify as trans, non-binary. And I think around the world there is a huge movement of liberation from the structures of gender and this emerges from and contributes to the broader crisis of masculinity, which can no longer successfully reproduce itself; It can't get as many adherents because it is failing to make life precious and liveable. Yet this crisis also generates its own reaction and backlash; it's dangerous nostalgia for the way we imagine things once were, allegedly.

I want to go back to the painting and look at the figure of the old man, the only figure in the image who is facing backwards, away from the distant ship that might rescue the refugees. He is looking towards the mysterious source of light in the image with a faraway, melancholic look in his eyes…

Phanuel: The older gentleman that you call attention to: One way of reading this image is to say, yes, he's looking backwards, and from his clothing you might place him in a different civilisation. But he is also holding onto and supporting the figure of a young man who may be dead or dying. I think there's something here about the old seeing the young dying, or burying the young. I am trying to think about how communication and miscommunication (intimacy) is a way of learning what's happening between generations. The current unexhausted possibilities of learning is the inverse of what we assume because now the older generation is learning from the younger generation.

We can also note this in the current global pandemic, in the West, we tend to offload onto marginalised Black and Brown people the

labour of reproduction and care. We send the elderly and older adults into long-term care facilities. Because these facilities are often understaffed and crowded, many are now vulnerable to infection to the point that some people are identifying them as 'death pits.' Despite this, I am comforted to hear one of my students early in the pandemic request an extension for an assignment because he is "currently in line at Costco [a major North American discount grocery store] with a community group getting supplies for folks who can't go themselves." These younger people, many on the frontline, are doing work, supporting people more susceptible to infections or at risk of dying; I find this very promising, this collective care work, this intergenerational activism of solidarity by coming together rather than staying apart.

Max: I think, on some level, the globally dominant model of masculinity today is that of *homo economicus*: the model of the impenetrable, self-contained, competitive, independent actor. And I think about the work of Sylvia Wynter, who helps us think about how this dominant paradigm of man emerged from European imperialism and global capitalism, lionising this—allegedly—naturally competitive supreme animal.[2] But the myth of *homo economicus*'s self-sufficiency and independence was a charade. His possibility was always based on the invisibilised reproductive labour of others, based on all those unsung and unseen people who did the labour around him. *Homo economicus* rode on the shoulders of so many others yet denied it.

I think, then, about the figure on the shoulders of the others in this painting, lifted up by his fellow refugees to wave to the passing ship that might rescue them. They are one another's only hope: it is not simply a brutal struggle for scarce resources that ends in cannibalism. This pyramid of collaborating figures gives us a view of what masculinity and humanity could be like if we recognised our shared vulnerability to one another and to not only the contagion of disease, but also the contagion of fortune, the contagion of identity, subjectivity, interreliance.

Phanuel: If we are talking about the hegemonic, competitive nature of masculinity as it operates within the system of patriarchy, I can't help but think about queer masculinity in this particular moment. I note that, today, Trump and others are seeking to identify Covid-19 as 'the Chinese virus'. Previously, the HIV virus, when it was spoken about at all, was understood as 'the gay virus'. How do we think about the refraction of the misnaming of these two viral crises through a patriarchal lens and, particularly, through a global north patriarchal lens?

Temporalities

Max: I think what's becoming clear about the present moment is that capitalism functions in part by keeping us all so busy we can't think or feel. And in this pandemic, we've been faced with a break in the capitalist temporality. My hope earlier on in the pandemic was that this would lead to space and time for reconsideration. But, oddly, I think that there has been a level of exhaustion and alienation such that many people have not had the opportunity to think about the kind of life they would *actually* like to live. Many people desire a return to a normal they hitherto hated simply to escape the kind of boredom or monotony of the pandemic. It reminds me of a lesson I learned when studying the radical imagination: we don't think individually, we think collectively.[3] We think collaboratively and we think through doing things together. And in this moment when we are doing less, or when our 'doing' is reduced to routine and when we are forced into isolation, the imagination atrophies. It is an unprecedented moment, but something militates against our ability to seize this strange pause in the status quo and mobilise the radical imagination.

Phanuel: I'm thinking about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and the collapse of time and place for those living in the wake of a twin pandemic: that of the virus that you've been talking about and also that of the police brutality towards Black lives. While these movements were spurred by the death of Black folks in the U.S., there seems to be a global pickup, a global response, of some sort. In terms of temporality, there seems to be both the exhaustion that

you speak of and an equal exhaustion towards the state repression or state racial violence. People are tired of its normalcy and are refusing to be conscripted into the state. The devaluation of the lives of the elderly that I spoke about (ageism) and the devaluation of Black lives (anti-Black racism) that I am talking about now make a lie out of these phrases: "physical distancing," "flattening the curve," and "self-quarantine": Black people are on the streets protesting because we know being six feet apart doesn't make us immune from going six feet under.

In a place like Vancouver, where I live and work and love, the BLM movement here is aware its work on the Coast Salish territories is being done on the traditional, ancestral and unceded land of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. And so, it commits itself to end systemic forms of racial violence and articulates issues affecting Indigenous people on these lands, not simply because in this location the ratio of state and racial violence is destructive to many forms of Indigenous life. It is not only that. What I am trying to get at is this: while Black activists and leaders advocate for all Black life, our advocacy, primarily imagined and led by Black women, queer and trans folks, is not a single issue. And yet, as much as it is not a single-issue platform, it is also not a post-racial project; for those who like to see this movement as multiracial, it will do us good to see Blackness as multiraciality and as a site of multiraciality, one that emerges from and with a Black-queer-feminist-trans-differently-abled-poor-radical-tradition perspective.

Rebellions against racialisation

Max: In the same way that I think we were speaking a moment ago about a kind of rebellion against gender, I think this is also rebellion against racialisation led ideologically and often practically by those Black people upon whose backs the pyramids of racial value were built. I think that in the same way that I feel like those most marginalised and most targeted by systems of gender terrorism—which is to say, non-binary people, trans people, people who have been denied a space within the gendered system—are in some ways opening a door for us to all be liberated from the gender system. So, in a strange way, in this moment, I think the fact that globally Blackness has been positioned at the bottom of the pyramidisation of race is one important reason why that movement has resonated around the world, though it began in the United States, even among people and in places where Black people are not numerically predominant.

Phanuel: I read this moment in the United States alongside other global Black movements, particularly the way the call from students to decolonise education across South Africa in the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements in 2015 spurred other students across the globe to refuse the epistemic architecture of colonial education. That this radical student movement focuses on decolonising universities by confronting questions relating to institutional racism, redesigning the Eurocentric university curriculum and increasing Black people's access to education reminds me of the relationship between colonisation and racialisation. Too often in North America, there is a tendency to separate racialisation from colonisation and vice versa. The logic to this false separation finds justification through the language of historiography, one where critics committed to this separation map a historical trajectory, identifying the 19th century as the moment of racialisation's arrival; they argue that colonialism predates racialisation. And yet, as we learn from the #RhodesMustFall movement, Black alienation and disempowerment is tied to the colonising and civilising project; hence, questions of racialisation must engage questions of colonisation. By no means am I collapsing the differences between each project; however, as projects of coercion and domination, they are part and parcel in organising our lives. And I find this difference quite interesting to highlight.

Max: How so?

Phanuel: Jodi Byrd's ground-breaking work comes to mind,[4] which offers the necessary critique of disciplines like ethnic studies, postcolonial studies and policies like multiculturalism and liberalism that participate in the assimilation and inclusion of settler colonialism. She does this by foregrounding colonisation, its ongoing projects

and the ongoing and exploitive treatment of Indigenous nations and people within the U.S. imperial culture. This, as in through the figure of the American 'Indian', she works to underline how the U.S. maintains its power structures. She particularly shows how in the U.S., 'Indianness' is rendered as the racial other and, through this creation or figuration, the nation can make up stories about the American 'Indian' that enact dispossession while at the same time professing/promising equality. She connects the violences and genocides of colonisation, the land stolen from Indigenous people, so we can hear the historical traumas that the racialising project of multiculturalism redirects our attention from. To do this, she distinguishes racialisation from colonialism.

I think this formulation allowed her to do a specific and necessary project of insisting not only on how foundational Indigeneity is to the formation of the U.S. but also on the intellectual genealogies that articulate this formation; how the foundational violence of remaking Indigenous lands into domestic spaces (for colonial interests) continue to require the U.S. imagination to continue to situate Indianness in the past. This necessary project constrained folks from thinking about racialisation in relation to Indigeneity or in relation to colonialism, or realising how colonisation gives force and justification to racialisation. Rather, colonialism is the frame with which we think about Indigeneity and racialisation is the frame for thinking about non-Indigenous folks. And I think we are in a moment where that logic—while it was necessary for bringing attention to the ongoing colonialism on Indigenous land—it does not help us do the work of cohabitating on the land and figuring out how to be accountable for each other and to bear witnesses to what's happening to each other. And so, these movements are actually insistent that we reimagine what it means to be here now with legacies of conquest, diasporas, displacement, dispossession, invasion, racialised alienation and exploitation, and be accountable for the lands that we live on. So, yes, we are in a different moment. And, as I said, there is something about living within the twin pandemics right now—in North America anyways—in a year of bearing witness to two viruses attacking Black folks and many of us refusing to attend to this anti-Black violence.

Max: It reminds me of a compelling argument made a few years ago by Justin Leroy.[5] He begins his essay by indicating the quite fractious debates between Black studies and Indigenous studies in the West and to what extent we should see anti-Black racism or settler colonialism as a 'primary mover' of this system of global oppression. He wants to put that question aside: it's a Gordian Knot that can't be cut. Instead, he looks at how both Indigenous and Black movements have understood themselves through solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian figure—at least for those outside of Palestine seeking solidarity with Palestinians—is both a colonised Indigenous figure *and* a racialised figure. They are both the colonised other and the racialised other within the global systems of racial capitalism of which the project of Israel is an important and demonstrative part.

I take from this the importance of dwelling in such difficult contradictions, as for instance between racial and colonial projects and looking elsewhere for the way they are reconciled, not in theory but in practice.

Within, against and beyond premature death

Phanuel: The disciplinary borders within academic knowledge productions risk becoming the borders of our imaginations. I, at times, worry about how intellectual capitalism in academic work, with its appetite for newness, quickly translates academic thinking into actionable policies, which then impact how we think, organise and live our lives. So, while separating colonialism from racialisation produces a border (mnemonic) that corrects how the above fields produce academic work, this theory does not erase the experience of coloniality that Black people and many racialised people live with. My friend and colleague, Denise Ferreira da Silva, imagines sociality as an ethics of coexistence in her short essay, "On Difference Without Separability."[6] I find myself returning to it again and again in my classrooms to remind myself and my students that differences need not be about separability—this opening up to difference is actually quite a difficult practice to live by. And yet, if we remember that separability is a principle of scientific

knowledge that devalues and orders Black life and death and if we remember that scientific knowledge has been instrumental in creating the conditions for the killing of Black people, we might all learn how to knit.

Max: I have increasingly been attracted to the language of Ruth Wilson Gilmore around premature death. She defines racism as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[7] I think this helps explain something about how we can be living in the same time but seemingly at different speeds. It can also explain to us that the systems we are living under kill us all, though at vastly different rates and with dramatically different consequences.

I think about this in terms of my own activism in Thunder Bay, which is infamous for being a kind of synecdoche for the colonial violence of the Canadian settler-colonial project, with incredible rates of premature death suffered by Indigenous people.[8] The deaths stem not only from police and settler violence but also from lack of medical care, lack of access to proper food, clean water, mental health services, the list goes on. It is a kind of conspiracy that is visible to those who suffer it but invisible or invisibilised to those who perpetuate and benefit from it. This seems to be the global model, too: a global distribution of premature death that is hidden in plain sight...

Phanuel: ...becoming public memories in the very land and geographies through which we walk. The way you describe Thunder Bay—and here I'm thinking about the legislated forms of social architectures of the city and how the 'lacks' you describe coalesce to dispossess Indigenous lives—also describes a typical Canadian settler-colonial geography structured by a pervasive anti-Indigenous racism. And yet, because Black geographers teach me that space is perceived and produced differently and because Indigenous scholars and feminists such as Audra Simpson and Dory Nason teach me the liberational politics in refusal,[9] I also want to believe that signs of Indigenous resistance and survivance lie within the Thunder Bay landscape. There is an essay by Michelle Daigle and Margaret Marietta Ramirez, "Decolonial Geographies," where they ask us to work towards "the spatial weavings of decolonial geographies on Indigenous lands and waters"[10] and, for me, part of that work is to see how a place like where you describe also contains decolonial futures within its everyday quotidian life, and work to protect these futures.

The imagination

The Raft of the Medusa, a painting by Théodore Géricault first exhibited in 1819. It currently hangs in the Louvre, Paris.

Max: This makes me think about coming back to *The Raft of the Medusa*. The raft is a space of incredible cruelty and violence, but also a space where new relationships need to be forged. What's so interesting, as we've discussed, is that Géricault is so crafty at making almost every moment of touch in this image ambiguous. We don't know if the figure in the pinkish, flowing headpiece in the middle of the image is supporting the man in front of him or pulling that man down. We don't know if the old man, the father figure, who is staring off into the distance on the left side of the image is clutching a young man's dead body to him or rescuing the

man from drowning. We don't know if, in the bottom right of the image, the Black body we see draped, face-down, across a white, red-headed body is alive or dead, if the Black body is pinning the white body down or if they are in some sort of loving embrace. None of the relationships in this image are clear to us. And so we can, and we must, read the painting as two things at once: on the one hand, an image of the complete degradation of humanity, the war of all against all, the origin and destiny of *homo economicus*; on the other, a portrait of the power of humanity to forge new relationships, new possibilities and new solidarities in the midst of want and terror and fear.

Phanuel: Particularly, the freedom of imagination dramatized at the heart of this image. What renders the image so delicious for me is the possible erotic manifestation of monstrous masculinities—of these men being shipwrecked and delirious for 13 days and drinking salt water, eating leather, consuming the dead—cannibalism's love crime; how in the midst of want and terror and fear these men cross a taboo, they eat one another. And possibly, as viewers, we are all invited into the throes of an orgy of some kind. However, this queer orgy (aren't all orgies somewhat queer?) is not solely the orgy of sexual exploration and exhaustion. It's a different order of orgy, an orgy of not knowing how to not be what the image is; we cannot stand outside this ironic self-aware image and proclaim not to be what it is; we don't know the end—we cannot know the end now—and so we are forced to account for our shifting times and its possibilities. And so, of this image, let me see in its continuous flow of bodies in relation to each other being beside themselves, doing things that both harm and give pleasure, an image asking viewers living in this historical moment to rethink the borders between pleasure and the erotic and violence and intimacy and vulnerability and death. After all, we see that in the time of the image, the racial hierarchies that justified the ship's journey seem to break down, invert even: we have the figuration of a Black body, a non-white body, lifted up, looking into the future, remembering forward, or, in some sense, rewriting the course of that ship's journey. There is that possibility as well in this image.

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