

# Constructing Palestine through Surveillance Practices

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**ABSTRACT** *State-building is normally associated with the setting-up of institutions such as the army, police force, judiciary and political system. By considering the Palestinian case of state-building, the paper relies on constructivist analysis to examine the use of surveillance as a discursive practice in State construction. Two central aspects of surveillance practices are considered in this paper: population count and spatial monitoring. Examination of these practices is situated in the asymmetrical power relations between Israel and the Palestinians. Conflict over land and people is manifested in the construction of citizenship, identities and geographical boundaries. The paper examines the historical and contemporary role of the census in both the Palestinian and Israeli case in the social construction of spaces and categorization of people. Examples are drawn from the first Israeli census taken in 1948, the monitoring of Palestinian refugees by the United Nations, and the contest over Jerusalem and borders as a consequence of the Oslo Agreement.*

## Introduction

In the final chapter of *Modernity at Large*, the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai casts state legitimacy in terms of cultural and discursive practices that are not usually accorded due recognition in mainstream social science analysis of the nation state:

The nation-state relies for its legitimacy on the intensity of its meaningful presence in a continuous body of bounded territory. It works by policing its borders, producing its people, constructing its citizens, defining its capitals, monuments, cities, waters and soils, and by constructing its locales of memory and commemoration, such as graveyards and cenotaphs, mausoleums and museums.<sup>1</sup>

Citizen construction, border policing, and people counting are essentially surveillance activities in which all States engage. These State activities consist of codifying and gathering of statistical information about populations. In the overwhelming majority of nation states this process of construction does not take place in a homogenous social terrain. It is rendered problematic due to the presence of certain 'problematic' groups, such as minorities and indigenous people, whose definition, categorization and incorporation into society challenge

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<sup>1</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 189.

the overarching ideological framework of the nation state.<sup>2</sup> The problem is further compounded in cases where State-building by one group is challenged by another who lays claim to the same territory. The Israeli-Palestinian encounter is a case in point.

For historical and political reasons, the Palestinians present an interesting case in the study of population surveillance. Notwithstanding their current attempts at State-building, for the most part the Palestinians have lived the last half-century in exile as refugees and minorities—both in their occupied homeland and elsewhere. Palestinian refugees, whose number approximates four million individuals, constitute the largest single national group among the more than 20 million refugees world-wide.<sup>3</sup> This dispersion has brought them under close scrutiny by different administrative regimes belonging to several host countries, including the military and civilian apparatuses of the Arab States and Israel, a United Nations organization in charge of refugees, and the so-called international community. As minorities and refugees, well into their fourth generation, the majority of the Palestinians have been living under constant surveillance. Their numbers and demography are continuously discussed and debated, their movement across international borders is closely monitored, their activities are routinely scrutinized for political content, and their identity and citizenship status are a perennial topic of discussion. In short, the Palestinians have experienced social ordering of the highest degree.

By using the Palestinians as a case study, the paper explores three broad themes: the epistemological and theoretical problems associated with the use of quantitative measures such as statistics, population construction through administrative means, and spatial surveillance. Examples will be drawn from the Israeli population census, the Palestinian and Israeli yearbooks of the contested city of Jerusalem, United Nations data on Palestinian refugees, and population movement at border crossings.

### Theorizing Social Statistics

Whether the task involves survey research or census data collection, the theoretical and methodological problems encountered in the production of statistical data are equally significant. At one level, the claims about theory-ladenness of observation and measurement are seized upon by ethnomethodologists in their criticisms of positivism. Cicourel, for example, singles out language, ‘background expectancies’, and tacit knowledge, on the part of both the person being studied and outside observer, as inducing distortions in the interpretation of the data so as to render understanding of the social world problematic. ‘[T]he world of observables is not simply “out there” to be measured with the measurement systems of modern science’, says Cicourel, ‘but the course of historical events and the ideologies of a given era can influence what is “out there” and how these objects and events are to be perceived, evaluated, described and measured’.<sup>4</sup> In responding to these types of criticism, Hindess questions the

<sup>2</sup> David Garland, ‘“Governmentality” and the Problem of Crime: Foucault, Criminology, Sociology’, *Theoretical Criminology*, 1(2) (1997), pp. 173–214.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2000), Cited by United States Department of State web site, <http://www.usinfo.state.gov/topical/refugees/chart.htm>

<sup>4</sup> In Barry Hindess, *The Use of Official Statistics in Sociology. A Critique of Positivism and Ethnomethodology* (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 23.

need to resort to sociology of knowledge to question the adequacy of survey research, as advocated by Cicourel and other ethnomethodologists, for fear this may lead to infinite relativism. If it is the case that language ‘and the cultural meanings it signifies, distorts, obliterates, acts as a filter or grid for what will pass as knowledge in a given era’, as claimed by ethnomethodologists, then it is impossible, according to Hindess, to know what is ‘out there’ in an undistorted and unbiased form.<sup>5</sup>

Cicourel’s criticism of the use of statistics extends beyond theory-ladenness claims to underscore the need to take organizational context into account when interpreting official data.<sup>6</sup> However, the relationship between the interpretative and the observable in understanding the social world is manifested at another level, at what Giddens labels the ‘double hermeneutic’. What distinguishes social from natural knowledge, according to Giddens, is the reflexive nature of the former according to which theories about society feedback into society and constitute the very phenomena which these theories purport to study. ‘The discourses of social science are currently absorbed into what they are about, at the same time as they (logically) draw upon concepts and theories already employed by lay actors’.<sup>7</sup> For Giddens, the hermeneutic connection is in part empirical, having to do with the need to develop and improve quantitative methods of analysis and data collection, but it is also theoretical and conceptual. If Giddens associates the rise of ‘administrative power’ of the nation state with the use of statistics,<sup>8</sup> Hacking goes further and locates the pervasive nature of such power in society at large:

The printing of numbers was a surface effect. Behind it lay new technologies for classifying and enumerating, and new bureaucracies with the authority and continuity to deploy the technology. There is a sense in which many of the facts presented by the bureaucracies did not even exist ahead of time. Categories had to be invented into which people could conveniently fall in order to be counted. The systematic collection of data about people has affected not only the ways in which we conceive of a society, but also the ways in which we describe our neighbour. It has profoundly transformed what we choose to do, who we try to be, and what we think of ourselves.<sup>9</sup>

Hindess offers to counter the tendency towards infinite relativism inherent in ethnomethodological critiques of quantitative research by anchoring claims of bias in ‘technical’ and ‘conceptual’ ordering of the data, and in not paying sufficient attention to the organizational context in which official data gathering originates.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is not the individual background and ‘subjective experiences’ of either the observer or observed, which contribute to such bias. Nor is it primarily a problem of controlling sampling errors by ensuring proper sampling, as the positivists claim. To demonstrate the point, Hindess examines the population classification used in the Indian census of 1951—immediately

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> John Kitsuse and A. V. Cicourel, ‘A Note on the Uses of Official Statistics’, *Social Problems*, 11 (1963), pp. 131–139.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 180–181.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence. Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 2–3.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Hindess, *The Use of Official Statistics in Sociology*..... pp. 39–44.

following India's independence from Britain. Adopting the classification criteria used originally by the British, the census showed that the dominant category of farmers, accounting for two-thirds of those who depended on agriculture for their livelihood in India, consisted of capitalist 'owner cultivators' at a time when protests by farmers and peasants over land reform in India attested to the concentration of land ownership in the hands of the few. Hindess's point in explaining this seeming contradiction is that, by cutting across the various categories, the census classification did not differentiate sufficiently between the various types of owner cultivator, rent-receiver, farm labourer, and peasant, thus lumping together heterogeneous (capitalist) groups among those who depend on agriculture and land as the basic means of production. By using the twin concepts of commodity and non-commodity exchange relations, Hindess concluded that the extent of capitalist penetration of Indian agriculture was much smaller than estimated by the census. More importantly, the reason for inflating the extent of capitalist agriculture in India is due to the conceptual design of the census and choice of categories used, which made it impossible to take into account India's social formations in which pre-capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production coexisted simultaneously.

As well, the collection of statistics reflects so-called national traditions. Desrosieres<sup>11</sup> shows that in Britain it was the tradition of empiricism aimed at studying social conditions (poverty in particular) in the latter part of the nineteenth century which shaped current British practice of gathering official statistics; in Germany the gathering of statistics was bound up with the need to administer and govern the many States which made up Germany in the nineteenth century—hence the legalistic slant found in the construction of the German census; in France State centralism led to the development of strong statistical institutions which continue to train government statisticians and oversee the collection of myriad regional and national data. With regard to the Middle East, efforts at modern census taking date back to the middle of the nineteenth century under the aegis of the Ottoman Empire, and, after the collapse of the Empire in the early part of the twentieth century, Britain (in Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt) and France (in Syria, Lebanon and North Africa) embarked on modernizing the Ottoman census by carrying out their own population count. The imprint of these occupying powers on population count of the Middle East remains to this day. In the case of the Palestinians, there is the added dimension of having experienced three separate occupation regimes during the last 100 years (Turkey, Britain and Israel), as well as Jordan (West Bank) and Egypt (Gaza) for two decades from 1948–1967, and finally having to build in the 1990s an administrative apparatus for census taking as part of State-building.

The use of statistics has special relevance in colonial and post-colonial societies. Anderson analyses census construction in the Dutch colonial State of Indonesia as a form of 'feverish imagining' which relied primarily on the 'logic of quantification' and 'identity categorization' as means for controlling the population.<sup>12</sup> Cohn describes in detail the need of the colonizing power (in this case the British in India) to develop 'investigative modalities' in order to facilitate the project of ruling. These modalities include 'the definition of a body

<sup>11</sup> Alain Desrosieres, 'Statistical Traditions: An Obstacle to International Comparisons?', in Linda Hantrais and Steen Megan (eds) *Cross-National Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (London and New York: Pinter, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso Press, 1994), pp. 169–170.

of information that is needed, the procedures by which appropriate knowledge is gathered, its ordering and classification, and then how it is transformed into usable forms such as published reports, statistical returns, histories, gazetteers, legal codes and encyclopedias'.<sup>13</sup> Cohn labelled these five modalities as historiographic modality, observational/travel modality, survey modality, enumerative modality, museological modality, and surveillance modality.

With regard to the Palestine/Israel case, our purpose in this article is to focus on the enumerative and surveillance modalities; the rest were addressed by other writers. For example, with regard to historiography, there is the on-going heated debate about post-Zionism and the role of the 'new historians' in challenging accepted myths surrounding the official version of Israel's creation and its treatment of the Palestinians.<sup>14</sup> The observational/travel modality is dealt with by Stein<sup>15</sup> in her analysis of Israeli tourism and the place of Palestinian landscape in it.<sup>16</sup>

## Population Construction

### *Palestine as a Contested Terrain*

Nowhere are the competing claims about Palestine—the land and its people—more visible than in the use of statistics. First, in accounting for land ownership, the concepts (e.g. type of tenure and land usage) and classification methods (collective versus individual land ownership) used in the census by the British during their occupation of Palestine, and prior to that by the Ottomans, and most recently by Israel, contributed to conflicting estimates about the magnitude and type of Arab- and Jewish-owned land in Palestine.<sup>17</sup> This is true with regard to the population size of each group.<sup>18</sup> Second, the debate over the accuracy of population estimates became more vociferous in the aftermath of the Oslo agreement, when international research organizations, the Palestinians themselves, and the Israelis before them, all resorted to survey research aimed at assessing, among other things, the demography and 'living conditions' of the population in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and in the process yielded conflicting results.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. British Rule in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, 'Between Celebration of Independence and Commemoration of Al-Nakbah: The Controversy over the Roots of the Israeli State', *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 32(1) (1998), pp. 15–19; Anita Shapira, 'Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate over the "New Historians" in Israel', *History and Memory*, 7(1) (1995), pp. 9–40; Illan Pappé, 'Critique and Agenda', *History and Memory*, 7(1) (1995), pp. 66–90.

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca Stein, 'National Itineraries, Itinerant Nations. Israeli Tourism and Palestinian Cultural Production', *Social Text*, 6(3) (1998), pp. 91–124.

<sup>16</sup> See also Danny Rubenstein, 'Seeing the Sights of Palestine', *Ha-'Aretz*, (25 July 1999) [English Internet edition of Hebrew daily in Israel]

<sup>17</sup> Elia Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel. A Study in Internal Colonialism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Michael R. Fischbach, 'Settling Historical Land Claims in the Wake of the Arab-Israeli Peace', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XXVII(1) (1997), pp. 38–50; G. Hale, 'Diaspora versus Ghourba: The Territorial Restructuring of Palestine', in D. Gordon Bennett (ed.) *Tension Areas of the World* (Delray Beach, F.L.: Park Press, 1982).

<sup>18</sup> Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine. Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Bishara B. Doumani, 'The Political Economy of Population Counts in Ottoman Palestine: Nablus, Circa 1850', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26 (1994), pp. 1–17.

<sup>19</sup> Elia Zureik, 'Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem', review of the Norwegian Study (FAFO) of the West Bank, Gaza and Arab Jerusalem, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6(4) (1993), pp. 418–425.

Categorization and ‘framing’<sup>20</sup> present one set of problems when interpreting quantitative data. In his extensive study of the Ottoman census in Palestine, McCarthy points out that political conflicts and cultural considerations played a prominent role in framing population debates. For example, women and children were routinely undercounted in the Ottoman census, as they were generally during nineteenth-century Europe and elsewhere. In the case of children, they were concealed from enumerators in order to avoid future conscription into the Ottoman army, while women were inaccessible due to the ‘difficulty of penetrating the sacredness and privacy of the home’.<sup>21</sup> Another dimension of population estimates, with distinct political overtones, was reflected in the debate surrounding the balance between Arabs and Jews living in Palestine. In order to buttress claims to the land, by showing continuous Jewish presence in Palestine, demographer Ruppin, an official of the Jewish Agency in charge of colonizing Palestine, resorted to ‘tampering’ with the data, according to McCarthy, in order to inflate the size of the Jewish population in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Palestine.<sup>22</sup> The problem was further compounded, when in 1922 the British administrators of the Palestine census accepted Ruppin’s figures as reliable and based on the Ottoman data, which they were not, according to McCarthy. Closely connected to the Arab-Jewish population balance is the controversy surrounding immigration into Palestine in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Bearing in mind that, since the latter part of the nineteenth century, immigration remained the main factor contributing to Jewish population growth in Palestine, those who advocated legalizing and increasing such immigration pointed out that a similar phenomenon took place among the Arab population. After conducting a thorough analysis, by taking into account various possible demographic assumptions, including unrecorded deaths among the Arab population and Arab immigration into Palestine, McCarthy concluded:

The argument that Arab immigration somehow made up a large part of the Palestinian Arab population is thus statistically untenable. The vast majority of the Palestinian Arab residents in 1947 were the sons and daughters of Arabs who were living in Palestine before modern Jewish immigration began. There is no reason to believe that they were not the sons and daughters who had been living in Palestine for many centuries.<sup>23</sup>

A more recent example, showing the political-national dimension of population count, is apparent in the nascent Palestinian State’s attempts at enumerating the population under its jurisdiction. Immediately after its establishment, the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) produced in late 1994 its first ‘current status report’ titled *Demography of the Palestinian Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. The report was not based on any new population count by PCBS, but on the 1967 Israeli census data which used *in situ* or *de facto* (rather than resident or *de jure*) population as the basis for its count. In the report’s preface, the director of PCBS noted that ‘[t]he controversy of population size and composition is the primary focus of this report’.<sup>24</sup> At the outset, the

<sup>20</sup> D. Sibley, ‘Purification of Space’, *Society and Space*, 6 (1988), pp. 409–421.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16–19.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, *Demography of the Palestinian Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. Current Status Report Series (No. 1), (Ramallah, Palestine: Palestinian Authority, 1994), (n.p.).

director of PCBS claimed that Israel underestimated the population size of the West Bank and Gaza, included only *de facto* residents present at the time, ignored permanent ones (i.e. those who are residents and have legal right to return to the territories, but happen to be outside the territories when the census was undertaken), and did not include east Jerusalem as part of the Arab population count of the West Bank. To get the point across regarding the contested nature of population count, the PCBS marshalled a host of other studies which produced estimates of the Palestinian population in the West Bank (including east Jerusalem) and Gaza that were at variance with the Israeli undercount.

### *Making Up People*

In his social constructivist analysis, Mitchell<sup>25</sup> draws upon Said's *Orientalism*<sup>26</sup> and Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*,<sup>27</sup> to examine the manner in which Western representation of Egypt in the nineteenth century in the pursuit of colonial domination, first by the French and later by the British, relied at the time on an incipient form of positivism and social engineering associated with Saint-Simon, August Comte, and Émile Durkheim in the case of the French, and, in the case of the British, on crude empiricism which aimed at studying Egyptian culture through revealing its constituent 'facts' and 'truths'. After all, it was in nineteenth century Britain where sophisticated social statistics were first introduced and refined. Correlation and regression analyses owe their debut to Francis Galton and Karl Pearson who, through their key positions in the eugenics movement in Britain, made use of statistical techniques to advocate the manipulation of population selection in accordance with the then popular doctrine of social Darwinism.<sup>28</sup>

It is thus no surprise to read in Mitchell's account of how both the British and French aimed at imposing 'order' on the mind and body of nineteenth century Egyptian society by introducing surveillance and disciplining techniques in the monitorial educational system, military training, workplace environment, and the use of living spaces. It is no accident that Jeremy Bentham, who visited Egypt in the nineteenth century and advised Muhammad 'Alī Pasha, drew up plans on how to instill obedience and discipline in the Egyptian population through the use of surveillance methods. Mitchell contends that Bentham's 'panoptic principle was devised on Europe's colonial frontier with the Ottoman Empire, and examples of the panopticon were built for the most part not in Northern Europe, but in places like colonial India'.<sup>29</sup> Galton also worked with the British Foreign Office and local Indian police officers to develop 'a system of classification that made possible fingerprinting as a means of identifying individuals'.<sup>30</sup>

An objectification of society, and indeed individual behaviour, were accomplished by using the machine as a metaphor for deconstructing Egyptian society and personality by British colonial administrators, whereas the French, who were

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

<sup>28</sup> See Donald MacKenzie, 'Eugenics and the Rise of Mathematical Statistics in Britain', in John Irvine, Ian Miles and Jeff Evans (eds) *Demystifying Social Statistics* (London: Pluto Press, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge ...*, p. 11.

influenced by the positivist approach of Émile Durkheim, treated society as a 'thing' that exists apart from its individual members, and it is to be represented in 'social facts' of which statistics are a fundamental component.<sup>31</sup>

Similar to Mitchell's, although addressing a present-day phenomenon, Zacharia draws upon the writings of Foucault and observes that a State-sponsored census acts as 'a mechanism for organizing and perpetuating state power', where 'the process of individualizing, categorizing and disciplining corporeal bodies became a modern instrument of domination and liberation'.<sup>32</sup> Doumani's reference to what he calls the 'political economy of population count' in nineteenth century Ottoman Palestine underlies a similar concern:

People counting, essentially was an exercise in hegemony that involved the (re)definition of the individual's place in the Ottoman polity and the use of knowledge to facilitate greater control. In this sense, population counts, perhaps more than any other single administrative action of the Ottoman authorities during the Tanzimat period, had a dramatic effect in that they literally touched the majority of the local population in one brief, but comprehensive sweep.<sup>33</sup>

It is instructive to note that official population records are not only contested discursively but are also physically purged. For example, after invading Lebanon in 1982 and entering Beirut, the Israeli forces, accompanied by military intelligence, headed straight to the Research Centre of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), where official statistics and other records of the Palestinian national movement were kept, and transported wholesale the documentary record to Israel.<sup>34</sup> The record, some of which was eventually returned to the PLO, was made available to policy-makers and academics.<sup>35</sup>

As is the case with Israel and the Palestinians in their efforts at census taking, neighbouring Arab States, where the majority of Palestinian refugees live, have chosen to deal with population count in ways which reflect State interests. Jordan, for example, in the wake of its 1996 census, did not release the population count broken down by Jordanian versus Palestinian for fear that the figures would show that the majority of Jordan's population consists of Palestinian refugees and their descendants.<sup>36</sup> Lebanon is another interesting example. In a country where census taking has not been carried out since the 1930s, independent observers concur that a census taken now would reveal that the Moslem population is the clear majority, thus undermining Christian claims to numerical and political dominance. However, when it comes to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who are overwhelmingly Sunnī Muslem and numbering close to 350,000 according to United Nations sources, successive Lebanese governments made a habit of inflating the size of the Palestinian refugee population so as to discourage their stay in the country, and justify their possible expulsion for fear that their resettlement would upset the Lebanese confessional balance.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> Christina Zacharia, 'Power in Numbers: A Call for a Census of the Palestinian People', *al-Siyāsa al-Filāṣṭīniyya*, 3(12) (1996) pp. 2–3.

<sup>33</sup> Bishara B. Doumani, 'The Political Economy of Population ...', p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York and London: Methuen Inc., 1987), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> See Rapahael Israeli (ed.) *PLO in Lebanon. Selected Documents* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983).

<sup>36</sup> Rana Sabbagh, 'Jordan Keeps Secret Palestinian Population's Rate', *Reuters World Report*, (27 January 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Elia Zureik, *Palestinian Refugees and the Peace Process* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996).



When faced with traditional social order exhibiting multiple loyalties and hybrid identities, as in the colonial Arab world, Mitchell and Owen remark that ‘the colonial state sought to reconstitute them [identities] as fixed and singular categories by means of its control over certain means of enumeration, such as the holding of a census’.<sup>38</sup> Equally important, Zacharia points out, ‘the post-colonial state had to reconstruct its national community upon and against the normalized categories constructed through colonialism. Resistant groups, according to Mitchell and Owen, were automatically considered “anti-national” or “primordial” and targeted demographically to be brought in line with state interests’.<sup>39</sup>

### *Population Count*

The importance of census taking is most apparent in the initial phase of State-building when citizenship and identity boundaries are being established. A contrast between the Israeli and Palestinian experiences is instructive here. One of the first tasks undertaken by Israel after declaring statehood in 1948 was to conduct a complete census count of every individual present within its borders. As Leibler<sup>40</sup> shows in her study of the role of the Israeli census in State-building, the alliance between the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) and the government served the interests of both parties. Ostensibly a scientific institution, the ICBS projected a neutral, non-political image that derived legitimacy from its statistical and scientific expertise. Like all scientific institutions, the ICBS claimed to interpret social reality and transmit facts to society. At the same time, the government strove to uphold the neutral image of the organization by appointing a senior professional statistician to head the organization. In reality, however, there was an implicit alliance between the two, which was described by Liebler in the following words: ‘The modern state needs an institution of national statistics in order to create the “citizen” and statistics needs the authority of the state in order to practice its profession’.<sup>41</sup> Although the ICBS was keen to distance itself from any political activity and confine itself to science, the interplay between the scientific and political came to the fore where the status of the Arab minority was concerned.

Faced with a need to provide precise counting of both the Jewish and Arab populations immediately after the State was declared and in the aftermath of the 1948 war, the ICBS director suggested to the government to impose a curfew on the population so that they would be counted *in situ*. People who were not present in their homes were counted as absent, and did not appear in the census registry. This was subsequently taken to mean by the government that individuals absent from their residence during census taking, even if staying elsewhere in the country, could not secure the right to return to their towns and villages and repossess their property. This was applied to the Arab but not Jewish population.

<sup>38</sup> Christina Zacharia, ‘Power in Numbers ...’; see also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso Press, 1994).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Anat A. Liebler, *Statistics as Social Architecture. The Construction of Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics as an Apolitical Institution* (Tel-Aviv, Israel: mimeographed, 1999); see also under the same title the author’s M.A. Thesis, (Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University, 1998) [In Hebrew].

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Roughly 32,000 Israeli Arabs, at the time constituting 20% of the original Arab population that remained in Israel after the 1948 war, were classified as ‘present-absentee’ at the time of the first census, and their number 50 years later reaches in excess of 250,000. Up to this day, they are prevented from returning to their homes, and they continue to live in so-called unrecognized communities. Notwithstanding claims of separation between scientific and political agencies, this is how Liebler described the alliance between the government and the ICBS in dispossessing the native Palestinians by creating the new category of present-absentee Arab citizens:

This separation, so adamantly upheld by Professor Bachi [first director of the ICBS], was able to ‘whitewash’ one of the major results of the first census, which with its attendant curfew became one of the mechanisms that permitted the state to appropriate Arab-owned land and property. Under conditions of curfew, only those found at home could be registered. However, because of the intensive battles fought at the time, a substantial proportion of the Arab population was not home. Nevertheless, perhaps for this very reason, orders were given that those absent from their homes would not be registered as citizens and that their ownership of goods, property and land was not to be recognized. The statistical category of ‘absentee property owners’—Arab residents whose property rights were abrogated—was born (this category would receive legal recognition a number of years later).<sup>42</sup>

Israel, which proclaimed itself a ‘Jewish’ State and came into being in the aftermath of the British colonial State in Palestine, adopted from the outset two main population categories in its census classification: ‘Jews’ and ‘non-Jews’. The residual category of non-Jews refers to the indigenous Palestinian population. In a way, the categories used by the Israeli census today reflect continuity in the practices of the colonial and post-colonial State. At the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, when Colonial Britain promised a homeland for the Jews in Palestine (their proportion at the time amounting to no more than 10% of the total population), the Declaration referred to the majority Arabs in residual fashion, as the ‘non-Jewish communities’ of Palestine. Until very recently, the Israeli census provided a breakdown of ‘non-Jews’ on the basis of religion, i.e. Muslim, Christian or Druze. Personal identity cards, which are issued to every Israeli citizen, list national origin as an ethnic-national marker (‘*qawmiyyau*’ in Arabic or ‘*li’oum*’ in Hebrew), by classifying the holder of the card as ‘Jew’, ‘Arab’ or ‘Druze’.<sup>43</sup> These ethnic markers have important consequences for citizenship rights, as for example in the debate over whether or not Israel is the State of its citizens or the State of the Jewish people. The label ‘Jew’, in both official and non-official discourse, carries with it a privileged status in terms of immigration laws (as per the Israeli Law of Return and the Nationality Law), land ownership, State welfare benefits, and general treatment by the media, while the label ‘non-Jew’ denotes the converse situation, i.e. a disadvantaged status.<sup>44</sup>

Through an administrative decision taken in 1995, the ICBS decided to alter its main population classification by adding the category of ‘other’ which

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> See Calvin Goldscheider, *Israel’s Changing Society. Population Ethnicity and Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 26–27.

<sup>44</sup> David Kretzmer, *The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990); George E. Bisharat, ‘Law, Land and Legitimacy in Israel and the Occupied Territories’, *The American University Law Review*, 43(3) (1994), pp. 467–561.

resulted in a new tripartite classification of 'Jews, Arabs and others'. The rationale for this new amendment is to account for non-Jewish individuals and spouses among (Jewish) Russian immigrants who came to Israel during the last decade, but did not divulge their religious background at the time of immigration or falsified it as being Jewish, and the presence of a sizable number of illegal foreign workers in the country. The outcome of this change in people counting triggered a panic campaign led by the Hebrew media and certain right-wing politicians, who warned of impending lower Jewish-Arab ratio, particularly in the contested city of Jerusalem. When subtracting 'others' from the Jewish population count, it is argued, the proportion of Jews in the city declined slightly to below the so-called 'red line' of 70%, as set by successive Israeli governments since the capture of east Jerusalem in 1967 and its subsequent unilateral annexation. Thus in order to ensure 'optimal demographic ratio' of having 'three Jews for every Arab in Jerusalem',<sup>45</sup> the Israeli government has all along advocated the building of new homes for prospective Jewish residents, while at the same time denying similar amenities to the Arab residents and gerrymandering the boundaries of Jerusalem so as to increase the city's Jewish population count. According to Benvinisti, a former deputy mayor of the city,

So how many Jews and Arabs live in Jerusalem? No one knows for sure. In any case, it is a worthless statistic as everyone knows the arbitrary municipal boundaries were principally demarcated for the purpose of demographic manipulation.

The annexation boundaries did not determine the city's demographic ratio. Rather, the 'optimal demographic ratio' has created the city's boundaries, leaving thousands of Palestinians outside.<sup>46</sup>

The correct demographic balance must be derived by adding those living in the densely built-up metropolitan area of Jerusalem, where demographic parity exists between Jews and Arabs, or there is perhaps an Arab majority.

As the current Middle East peace talks gain momentum, in an effort to reach a final settlement between the two sides, the Israeli-Palestinian contest over Jerusalem emerges as a key element in current negotiations. This contest finds expression in the area of data production. By publishing special statistical monographs on Jerusalem, Israelis and Palestinians appeal to science (in the form of professional institutional backing and statistical data) to garner legitimacy for their respective claims. While the PCBS published its first statistical yearbook devoted to Jerusalem in late 1999, the Israel Institute for Jerusalem Studies, a right-wing think tank, in cooperation with the Jerusalem municipality under the leadership of the Likud Mayor, Ehud Olmert, has been publishing statistical monographs devoted to Jerusalem since 1982.

An examination of both publications reveals the following. By presenting Arab and Jewish population count of the city as a whole, the Israeli yearbook, which relies primarily on data available through the ICBS and the Jerusalem municipality, naturalizes Israeli claims to a unified city. Even though the unilateral annexation by Israel of the eastern part of the city, where the Arab population lives, is illegal and not recognized internationally, the monograph

<sup>45</sup> Meron Benvinisti, 'Bikini on Jerusalem's Beach', *Ha-'Aretz*, (29 July 1999) [English Internet edition of Hebrew daily in Israel]

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

treats the city as a unified entity by presenting data on both Arabs and Jews as if they were members of the same geopolitical space. In addition to incorporating the Arab population of east Jerusalem in its census count, the Israeli monograph includes several Jewish suburbs located outside the city's 1967 boundaries, as well as other Arab localities situated outside the Green Line. The outcome of this population construction is that the Jewish population of Jerusalem reaches 429,000 and the Arab 193,000 residents. Thus, by redefining the boundaries of Jerusalem, advocates of annexation of the Arab parts of the city are able to show that, as capital of Israel, Jerusalem is predominantly a 'Jewish' city where the Arabs are a minority and Jews constitute a clear majority.

The Palestinian yearbook of Jerusalem is published by the PCBS, the official statistical agency of the Palestinian Authority (PA). In addition to its stated scientific aim to provide data on the Arab population of Jerusalem for research and policy purposes, the yearbook questions Israeli claims to sovereignty over the Arab part of the city. The PCBS adopts a different definition of Jerusalem, by using the Ottoman division of the country into governorates. Thus, the governorate of Jerusalem refers to east Jerusalem and the suburbs which were annexed by Israel, as well as other parts located in the West Bank which constitute the remaining portions of the administrative unit known as the Jerusalem governorate. A comparison between the two monographs shows that the Palestinian count of the Arab population in the city is slightly higher than that provided by the ICBS—by around 15,000 people.

As stated by the director of the PCBS in the preface to the Jerusalem yearbook, 'Jerusalem and the provision of maximal statistical data on Jerusalem have special importance in this subtle and critical stage, namely the final status negotiations of which Jerusalem constitutes one of the core pillars and a pivotal axis of its agenda'.<sup>47</sup> In addition to providing the usual statistical indicators, the Palestinian census included data on confiscated identity cards from Arab residents of the city, the number of residents detained by Israeli forces, Arab victims resulting from encounters with Israeli security forces, and the number of Arab houses demolished in the city of Jerusalem. As well, the Palestinian monograph makes a point of noting that the actual work of the PCBS in Jerusalem was hampered by the closure in 1995 of the PCBS office in the city in accordance with a special Israeli law to this effect, and was followed by the passage of another law in 1997 prohibiting the Arab residents of the city from participating in census taking under the aegis of the PCBS.<sup>48</sup> In other words people counting, considered to be a scientific undertaking, has become part of the ideological war regarding sovereignty claims over Jerusalem.

What is characteristic of Israeli nationalist discourse, which is responsible for shaping population labelling, is the taboo it imposes on the use of 'Palestinian' when referring to the minority Palestinian population who are citizens of Israel. Between 1948–1967, the label Palestinian was either cleansed from Israeli vocabulary (recall Golda Meir's often-quoted words 'that there is no such a thing as the Palestinian people'), or was used to refer to 'terrorists' among Palestinian refugees living in the neighbouring countries who mounted attacks against Israeli

<sup>47</sup> Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook, Jerusalem—1998* (Ramallah, Palestine: Palestinian Authority, 1999) (n.p.).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

targets. Nowadays the label Palestinian is reserved for those who live in the West Bank and Gaza. This consensus is not confined to official discourse, but also extends to Israeli social scientists who research the Palestinian minority in Israel. With very few exceptions, and until fairly recently, they too avoided the use of 'Palestinians' and preferred the 'Arabs of Israel'. This categorization, which reflects the dominant ideology, has less to do with reality, or how the minority group feels about itself, and more with the politics of segmentation and de-coupling of the indigenous population from both the land of Palestine and the rest of the Palestinian people.

If at one level the census provided a means for the State to assert control over its population by defining the identities of its subjects, and who is to count as a citizen and who is not, at another level the census is used to assert a degree of representation hitherto denied to colonized people. The adage that 'there is power in numbers' underlies the urge of post-colonial nations and dispossessed minorities to assert their legitimacy through counting their populations. Census-taking becomes the most symbolic act of State-building. In the Palestinian case, after the 1993 Oslo agreement and the establishment of the PA, the PCBS was one of the first agencies to be created, and since then it has embarked upon an ambitious programme of census taking by producing the usual quarterly surveys on labour force participation, a population count, national accounts, and numerous specialized censuses and reports. In the post-Oslo period, the project of conducting a Palestinian census by the Palestinians themselves assumed political significance and was considered a sign of national empowerment. Edward Said, for example, saw the need for census enumeration as a vehicle for Palestinians to assert their presence on the world stage irrespective of their dispersal and the jurisdictions under which they happen to live. Thus for him a comprehensive Palestinian census, a representation of peoplehood, is one which records the numbers of the Palestinian people world-wide, and is not confined to those who are under the control of the PA in the West Bank and Gaza where only a quarter of the Palestinian people live<sup>49</sup> In response to such criticisms, Yasser 'Arafat, president of the PA, issued a decree in 1998 mandating the PCBS to record the number and location of the Palestinian people wherever they reside,<sup>50</sup> a practice which is identical to that carried out by the ICBS, which routinely presents in its reports data on the distribution of Jews world-wide.

What makes the Palestinian case worthy of sociological attention is that it provides an additional dimension to the usual debates about the politics of census construction by national governments. Here we have an instance whereby one government (Israel) is heavily involved in the construction of population parameters of another political entity (PA). As we have seen so far, because the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is essentially one involving people and claims to the land, current Middle East peace negotiations have unavoidably had to deal with these issues in concrete terms. Thus following the Declaration of Principles which was signed in 1993, the two sides concluded an Interim Agreement in 1995; it included detailed description of population issues. Article 28 of the Agreement, which is titled *Population Registry and Documentation*, specifies the manner in which transfer of population registry from the Israeli

<sup>49</sup> Christina Zacharia, 'Power in Numbers ...',

<sup>50</sup> Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook, Jerusalem—1998*.

authorities to the PA would take place, and how, in the future, any changes in the status of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza would have to be reported to Israel. Identity cards issued by the PA to Palestinian residents under its jurisdiction would have to be turned over to the Israeli authorities. In the words of the Agreement, 'The new identification numbers and the numbering system will be transferred to the Israeli side', and 'the Palestinian side shall inform Israel of every change in its population registry, including, inter alia, any change in the place of residence of any resident'.<sup>51</sup> Any changes in the information pertaining to passports or travel documents used by Palestinian residents will have to be reported regularly to Israel as well, and prior Israeli approval will have to be given before permits are issued to visitors seeking permanent resident status in the Palestinian territories. Thus, the Oslo Agreement becomes, among other things, a population monitoring instrument in the hands of Israel:

The Palestinian side shall provide Israel ... on a regular basis with the following information regarding passports/travel documents and identity cards:

- (a) With respect to passports/travel documents: full name, mother's name, ID number, date of birth, sex, profession, passport/travel document number, and date of issue and a current photograph of the person concerned.
- (b) With respect to identity cards: identity card number, full name, mother's name, date of birth, sex and religion and a current photograph of the person concerned.<sup>52</sup>

### *Refugee Count*

Another area where population count assumes special significance is among refugees, who constitute around 50% of the global figure of around eight million Palestinians. The size and composition of the Palestinian refugee population is a topic of debate with distinct political overtones, particularly in the current phase of the post-Oslo period with final-status talks about to resume between Israel and the Palestinians. As expected, Israelis and Palestinians produce their own divergent versions of refugee count, with the United Nations and other international organizations offering their own figures.<sup>53</sup>

For the purpose of this discussion, and by way of example, I will first concentrate on the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), an organization established in 1950 to cater exclusively to the needs of Palestinian refugees, to construct an administrative definition of who is a refugee and who is poor among the refugees registered with it, and how the latter definition has ramifications for family structure. In order to be considered poor and included in UNRWA's hardship cases, a prerequisite for receiving food rations from the Agency, a refugee family must not, among other things, have an adult male living in the household between the ages of 18–60. Latte-Abdullah<sup>54</sup> rightly points out that UNRWA's rather arbitrary definition of economic hardship is not determined according to employability and availability of work

<sup>51</sup> *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (Ramallah, Palestine: Palestine Liberation Organization, Department of Negotiations Affairs, 1995), pp. 114–115.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>53</sup> Elia Zureik, *Palestinian Refugees and the Peace Process ...*, p. 5–27.

<sup>54</sup> Stephanie Latte-Abdullah, *Refugees' Family Structures and UNRWA in Palestinian Camps in Jordan*, paper presented at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, Chicago, December 1998).

opportunities, but by the projected ability of the UNRWA to deliver food rations. Thus, budgetary and administrative needs to reduce the number of hardship cases on the part of the Agency led to the splitting up of extended households (by having adult males leave the extended household), increasing the number of nucleated households, early marriages (and divorces), and the number of female headed households.

Second, and more importantly, the administrative definition by UNRWA of who is a refugee to begin with has resulted in conflicting estimates of refugee count. For example, UNRWA defines a refugee as any person who resided in Palestine at least 2 years prior to the establishment of Israel on 15 May 1948, and 'who lost both his home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 war'.<sup>55</sup> However, not all those who became refugees in the long protracted conflict with Israel eventually registered with UNRWA, whose estimate for 1999 hovers around 3.57 million refugees.<sup>56</sup> Well-to-do Palestinians, who also became refugees but did not need immediate assistance, did not register with UNRWA. Refugees who ended up in places other than UNRWA's so-called five areas of operations (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza) did not appear in UNRWA's registry. Similarly, those who were internally displaced (present-absentee) in Palestine during the fighting in 1948 and 1949, and remain displaced to this day in what became Israel, do not appear in UNRWA's refugee count, even though UNRWA did include them initially until Israel terminated the Agency's jurisdiction over them in 1952. As well, UNRWA's registry does not cover those who were displaced in the 1967 war, or those who, because of Israeli occupation regulations, lost their residence status on account of being absent from the occupied territories beyond the allowed period. Altogether, this adds more than one million people to the total refugee count of UNRWA.<sup>57</sup> Finally, it should also be mentioned that gender discrimination is built into UNRWA's administrative procedures for census count. The offspring of Palestinian refugee women married to non-refugees, lose their refugee status with the Agency.<sup>58</sup>

A telling example of the interplay between demography and politics surfaced more than once during the Middle East peace negotiations between Israel and Palestinians on the issue of family reunification, and the return of displaced Palestinians as a result of the 1967 war. In discussing the modalities of return, a key definitional problem cropped up which remains unresolved to this day, that is, what constitutes a 'family'? Israel, for example, insisted that 'family' implies a nuclear-type family, and for the purpose of family unification the children must be below the age of 16, whereas the Palestinian negotiators stressed that according to Arab culture and practice, a family encompasses immediate and extended members. It is clear that each definition impacts the number and category of displaced family members, if and when they are allowed to return home.<sup>59</sup>

Counting the Palestinians becomes a political act laden with controversy.

<sup>55</sup> Elia Zureik, *Palestinian Refugees and the Peace Process ...*

<sup>56</sup> United Nations Relief and Works Agency, *Registration Statistical Bulletin for the First Quarter 1999 (I/1999)* (Amman, Jordan: UNRWA Department of Relief and Social Services, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Elia Zureik, *Palestinian Refugees and the Peace Process ...*

<sup>58</sup> C. M. Cervenak, 'Promoting Inequality: Gender-Based Discrimination in UNRWA's Approach to Palestine Refugee Status', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 16(2) (1984), pp. 300–374.

<sup>59</sup> Salim Tamari, *Palestinian Refugee Negotiations: From Madrid to Oslo II* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996).

Depending on who does the counting and the categories used, there is dispute over how many Palestinians there are, their geographical distribution, the type of citizenship they can claim, whether they can be classified as refugees or non-refugees, whether their claim to land ownership in Palestine is legal or not, whether they have the right to return to their homes versus homeland, and so on. These disputes are not settled by appealing to the truth. As ethnomethodologists remind us, the production of official data and records reflects the intentions of the official agency in the first instance.<sup>60</sup>

What the above discussion highlights are the problems encountered by minorities in their representation in national censuses. However, the Palestinians are constantly striving to differentiate themselves from the surrounding society, and strive towards numerical parity relative to the dominant group, but in the process present administrative regimes with the rationale for subjecting them to further surveillance measures and population classification.

## **Borders, Frontiers and State Construction**

### *Frontier in Settler Regimes*

The discussion of borders, boundaries and frontiers is central to understanding the formation of States generally. Usually, frontiers and boundaries are associated with 'traditional States' and borders with nation states. Borders reflect the development of geographically bounded administrative units that are closely regulated, or, to use Giddens' terminology, 'reflexively monitored'. Borders demarcate the jurisdiction between States.<sup>61</sup> Frontier, however, is associated with nation states in the making, or with feudal and traditional societies. Frontier could be external, as when a State attempts to expand its territory, or internal to the geopolitical unit under consideration, as when a State seeks to settle territory under its control. Finally, boundaries are permeable or 'are dynamic aspects of a state, with all vigorous states seeking to expand their spatial spread, and declining ones contracting to physically easily defensible land-contours'.<sup>62</sup> Lamar and Thompson regard 'the frontier not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpretation between two previously distinct societies',<sup>63</sup> and remark the following with regard to Israel:

Probably the nearest contemporary approach to the kind of frontier dealt with in this book, where rival societies compete for control of the land, is to be found in Israel. There, despite the complex early history of Jewish–Arab relations, the contemporary situation is in essence the product of modern Jewish immigration into a territory that had been dominated by Arabs for many centuries. It is a frontier situation with many characteristics that will be familiar to readers of this book: settlement by people with a technology superior to that of the 'indigenous' inhabitants and with access to the skills, products, and capital of the industrialized West; their creation of a bridgehead behind the shelter of colonialism; their control of a postcolonial state; and their victories in frontier

<sup>60</sup> Adam Ashforth, 'Reckoning Schemes of Legitimation: On Commissions of Inquiry as Power/Knowledge Forms', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 30(1) (1990), pp. 1–22.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence. Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49–51.

<sup>63</sup> Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, *The Frontier in History. North and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 7.



wars, and the subjugation and segregation of those remaining. The Israeli frontier is still 'open,' with raids and counterraidings taking place across its contested boundaries; and it remains to be seen whether, when it closes, the state of Israel will be secure or whether it will have been ephemeral, like the white settlements of South Africa.<sup>64</sup>

Above all else, borders are intended to separate people (and nations) and regulate their movement. As well, since borders demarcate State sovereignty, they play an important role in the reproduction of States—both population and economy. For this reason, States are anxious to label any crossing point as border as long as it affects State sovereignty through control of land, and the movement of people and goods. With the stated aim of 'separating the two peoples', the current Israeli government, in anticipation of the Middle East final status talks, which will involve among other things sovereignty, borders and refugees, has embarked upon establishing what Benvinisti<sup>65</sup> calls 'soft borders' between the Palestinian territory and Israel. These internal border points between non-contiguous enclaves of the Palestinian areas and Israel, are akin to a 'zone of interpretation', where Israel basically does the 'interpretation', since it retains military superiority and remains in charge of controlling who can and who cannot pass through these points. Benvinisti draws attention to the linkages between internal (soft) borders and international ones, which Israel also controls:

Control of the external wrapper is essential for the Oslo strategy, because if the Palestinians control even one border crossing—and gain the ability to maintain direct relations with the outside world—the internal lines of separation will become full-fledged international borders, and Israel will lose its control over the passage of people and goods. Puncturing the external system will necessitate the establishment of a vast array of physical obstacles, crossing points and custom barriers between the enclaves of the 'internal separation', and will expose the absurdity of the tortuous and noncontiguous borders of the ethnic cantons on which all sides of the permanent settlement are based.<sup>66</sup>

A central theme in the literature on frontiers and settler regimes, is the so-called Turner thesis, named after the American historian Frederick Turner.<sup>67</sup> The thesis investigates the relationship between the frontier ethic and individualism, on the one hand, and the development of democratic values in the US, on the otherhand. Although this thesis has been subjected to severe criticisms,<sup>68</sup> a bold attempt to apply it to the Israeli 'frontier' in Palestine was carried out by Kimmerling. In a series of studies, Kimmerling<sup>69</sup> modified Turner's thesis, by showing that 'low frontierity' in Palestine (in contrast to the US high frontierity where land was abundant) compelled Zionist settlers in pre-1948 Palestine to develop collectivist (rather individualist) institutions premised on nationalist slogans justifying the exclusion and removal of the native Arab population from

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 312–313.

<sup>65</sup> Meron Benvinisti, 'The Illusion of "Soft Borders"', *Ha-'Aretz* (14 October 1999) [English Internet edition of Hebrew daily in Israel]

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Frederick Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962).

<sup>68</sup> See Shlomo Hasson, 'From Frontier to Periphery in Israel: Cultural Representations in Narratives and Counter-Narratives', in Oren Yiftachel and Avinoam Meir (eds) *Ethnic Frontiers, Landscape of Development and Inequality in Israel*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, 'Boundaries and Frontiers of the Israeli Control System', in Baruch Kimmerling (ed.) *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989); *Zionism and Territory. The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1983).

the land. Ben-Eliezer provides a wide ranging assessment of the frontier thesis as applied to the Palestinian-Israeli debate, by showing that although the pioneer in Turner's nineteenth century America and its corresponding *Halutz* in Israel, shared the motif of 'conquest of the "wilderness" by establishing agricultural settlements—the farther from the centre the better—in order to realize the national ideal, bring progress and civilization, and confront the dangers inherent in primitivism, backwardness, and wilderness in the form of Indians or Arabs', the reality on the ground was very different in each case.<sup>70</sup> Israeli colonization, dating back to the latter part of the nineteenth century but becoming extensive, first in British Mandatory Palestine starting in the early part of the twentieth century and continuing thereafter in Israel proper and in the occupied territories, was not premised on individualism, as was the case with its American counterpart, but on collectivism where 'the individual was constantly called upon to contribute and make personal sacrifices for the sake of the collectivity'.<sup>71</sup> Neither in America nor in Palestine was the territory empty of people, nor were the indigenous people backward—except possibly in terms of a Eurocentric model. The Israeli brand of pioneering, or *Halutzit* in Hebrew, was inspired by nascent statist policies, and a Zionist ideology with collectivist-nationalist values at its core. This hegemonic form of domination which engulfed the Jewish community and the Palestinian population was accomplished through the creation of a 'pioneering myth', which in the case of the Jewish community, Ben-Eliezer contends, blurred the line between civil society and the State, and more importantly, 'contributed to the construction of a system of domination which combined coercion and consent and, in fact, limited potential range of knowledge, action, or dissent'.<sup>72</sup>

The geographical determinism present in Turner's work, as well as in Kimmerling's (the periphery shapes the centre), is accompanied by conceptual neglect of the place of the native population (American Indians and Palestinian Arabs) as agency in the struggle over land. Moreover, rather than present the Jewish settler population as driven by a monolithic Zionist ideal, Shafir,<sup>73</sup> for one, deploys the political economy framework and teases out the class basis of Zionist political mobilization and nation-building, and the subordinate place of the non-European Jewish immigrants and Palestinians in it.<sup>74</sup>

Spatial control figures out internally in the construction of settler states and deeply divided societies. As pointed out above and by several other researchers,<sup>75</sup> the Israeli State has been engaged since its inception in the exercise of internal spatial control *vis-à-vis* the indigenous Palestinian population. This attempt at 'purification of space', to use Sibley's term,<sup>76</sup> involves social and

<sup>70</sup> Uri Ben-Eliezer, 'State versus Civil Society? A Non-Binary Example of Domination through the Example of Israel', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11(3) (1998), pp. 374–375.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>73</sup> Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labour, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1982–1914* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>74</sup> Uri Ram, 'The Colonization Perspective in Israeli Sociology: Internal and External Comparisons', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 6(3) (1993), p. 337.

<sup>75</sup> Ghazi Falah, 'Reenvisioning Current Discourse: Alternative Territorial Configurations of Palestinian Statehood', *The Canadian Geographer*, 41(3) (1997), pp. 307–330; Oren Yiftachel, 'The Internal Frontier: Territorial Control and Ethnic Relations in Israel', *Regional Studies*, 30(5) (1996), pp. 493–508; R. Khamaysi, *Planning and Housing among Arabs in Israel* (Tel-Aviv: International Centre for Peace in the Middle East, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> D. Sibley, 'Purification of space.'

spatial ordering by means of 'framing' and 'classification'. The stronger the classification and framing in the social ordering of space is, the more homogeneous the space and the more difficult it is to accept entry of 'foreign' elements into it. Weak framing and classification, however, signify blurred borders and allow tolerance of ambiguity and diversity in the construction of the space's content. Sibley's focus is on the role of consumerism in creating homogenous social groups that lead to exclusionary practices in consumption and residential location. Purification of the Israeli space, furthermore, is propelled in the first instance by ideological concerns related to population control and contest over land. The various measures introduced by the State from zoning and land ownership laws, to State confiscation of property for 'public' use and security needs are intended to ensure strong classification and framing of space and people. This does not mean that ideological concerns *ipso facto* determine the outcome of the struggle over control of space. The interplay between ideology and economics can lead to unintended consequences and the redefinition of spatial control. Rabinowitz's study of Upper Nazareth, a predominantly Jewish town overlooking the Arab city of Nazareth, demonstrates the case well. According to Rabinowitz, 'The real estate realm thus emerges as the main arena where relations between the Israelis and Palestinians are acted out'.<sup>77</sup> Although the space of Upper Nazareth, a Jewish settler town established in the 1950s on confiscated Arab land, is closed to prospective Palestinian residents, the latter nevertheless managed to buy property and move into the town albeit in small numbers and ended up living in highly segregated neighbourhoods. What determines the final outcome in the control of space is the market's 'invisible hand' whereby generous price offers lure Jewish residents to sell homes to Palestinians. These successful practices in resistance on the part of Palestinians do not translate to the national scene to effect a change in the subordinate position of the Palestinian population in Israel.

### *Surveillance of Bodies*

People counting and border construction are but two of several practices by States to manage their citizens. States also lay claim to, or 'embrace',<sup>78</sup> their citizens in order to provide them with social services, monitor their activity, collect taxes from them, and track their movement.<sup>79</sup> Giddens<sup>80</sup> expresses a similar view and argues that there is a correspondence between citizenship rights and surveillance. Using Marshall's three-fold typology of rights, Giddens associates policing, a form of surveillance, with social rights, whereas 'reflexive monitoring' by the 'State's administrative power' is connected with political rights, and, as a third form of surveillance, the 'management of production' relates to economic rights. There are two additional rights, which are not discussed by Giddens, but which are becoming increasingly important in the

<sup>77</sup> Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth. The Ethnography of Exclusion in Galilee* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 52.

<sup>78</sup> See John Torpey, 'Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate "Means of Movement"', *Sociological Theory*, 16(3) (1998), pp. 239–259.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence. Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 206.

context of globalization. These are cultural rights, and the right of movement within States and across international borders. In order to avoid diversion in the discussion, I shall not deal with the debate surrounding cultural rights,<sup>81</sup> other than to say that they can be subsumed under social rights, although they are distinctive in being based on ensuring group rather than individual rights. Right of movement, i.e. the right to travel and leave one's residence and able to return to it unhindered, however, falls within the purview of social and political rights (some would argue human rights) where the State exercises surveillance through a combination of administrative power and policing. Torpey makes a useful contribution in this regard, by remarking that 'systems of registration, censuses, and the like—along with documents such as passports and identity cards that amount to mobile versions of the "files" [in Max Weber's sense] states use to store knowledge about their subjects—have been crucial in states' efforts to embrace their citizens.<sup>82</sup> An individual is considered citizen if he or she appears in the population registry. If Weber described the State in terms of exercising 'monopoly over the legitimate means of violence', and Marx saw capitalism as monopolizing the ownership of the means of production, Torpey goes one step further and singles out the State's role in 'monopolizing the legitimate means of movement' of its subjects, both internally and across national boundaries, as a crucial feature of the modern nation state and the creation of national identities.

It is important to underscore the two-sided nature of surveillance. While its main objective is to monitor and control, it has an empowering dimension as well. This is apparent in the linking of rights to surveillance as delineated above by Giddens, and more generally through his concept of the 'dialectic of control'. By the same token, Torpey's concept of citizen 'embrace' by the State is justified on the basis of delivery of all sorts of services. In the case before us, the issuing of identity cards to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, while undoubtedly is the symbol of surveillance *par excellence*, it has an empowering effect as well. Holders of identity cards can lay claims to certain rights *vis-à-vis* the occupation authorities, and in east Jerusalem *vis-à-vis* the Israeli legal system itself. In both cases, holders of Israeli-issued identity cards can exercise certain rights, albeit of limited and circumscribed nature. As a matter of fact, the identity card is one of the most coveted documents sought after by the highly monitored Palestinian population.

Mitchell conceives of the State as essentially the outcome of co-production efforts, and argues that the State project should be thought of as a 'metaphysical effect', constituted by Foucauldian disciplinary practices and the institutions which they create. 'The state,' according to Mitchell, 'should be addressed as an effect of detailed processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, and supervision and surveillance, which create the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state and society'.<sup>83</sup> The frontier, which he equates with boundary, constitutes one element of the nation state:

One characteristic of the modern-nation state, for example, is the frontier. By establish-

<sup>81</sup> See Will Kymlicka (ed.) (1995) *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>82</sup> John Torpey, 'Coming and Going ...', p. 245.

<sup>83</sup> Timothy Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics', *American Political Science Review*, 85(1) (1991), p. 95.

ing a territorial boundary and exercising absolute control over movement across it, state practices help define and constitute a national entity. Setting up and policing a frontier involves a variety of fairly modern practices—continuous barbed-wire fencing, passports, immigration laws, inspections, currency control and so on. These mundane arrangements, most of them unknown two hundred or even one hundred years ago, help manufacture an almost transcendental entity, the nation state.<sup>84</sup>

In deeply divided societies, like the old South Africa and Israel, control of space and people is paramount. The elaborate system of passes and identity cards, which was used at one time in South Africa's apartheid system, and until 1966 by Israel's military rule over its Palestinian citizens, but remains prevalent in Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, regulates spatial locations and movement of people; it is based on race (in South Africa) and ethnicity, religion, and national origin (in Israel). Unlike the old South African system which was based on racial superiority, Israel's use of identity cards with ethnic markers, as shown earlier in this paper, is linked to a differentiated conception of citizenship where rights and obligations are regulated according to State policies determined to a large measure by a Zionist ideological framework. Central to this ideology is Israel's law of return which invites Jews living anywhere in the world to immigrate to Israel, yet denies Palestinians 'the natural right of citizenship granted a person by virtue of his being an ancient resident of a given territory'.<sup>85</sup>

Three examples of spatial control will be offered bearing on the Palestinian-Israeli encounter. The first is a commentary on the efforts of an Israeli tourist company to advertise Gaza as an 'exotic' destination for Israeli tourists. Bear in mind that until recently, and as a result of the Oslo accords, occupied Gaza was considered part of 'greater Israel' by many Israelis, but shunned by most Israelis as a dangerous place to visit. The creation of borders and checkpoints between Israel and the fledgling PA, according to Benvenisti, bestowed on identity an objective dimension: '[b]orders and sovereignty over territory are not necessarily the reflection of a separate national identity. In most cases, they create this identity rather than express it. Geopolitical facts, however artificial and absurd, cause people to detach themselves emotionally from territory they once considered their homeland. Post a 'Border Crossing' sign and place uniformed guards near it and anyone walking past them is bound to feel that he is abroad'.<sup>86</sup> The second example involves the monitoring of movement by Palestinian labourers across the border between Gaza and Israel. According to recent reports, Israel is about to regulate the movement of Palestinian workers into Israel by introducing biometric monitoring system which relies on genetic and retinal identification. This genetic surveillance system will be augmented with the use of smart identity card carried by each Palestinian worker crossing the border on which detailed background information of the card holder will be stored, and will be instantaneously matched with genetic data.<sup>87</sup> A similar system

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> Dan Rabinowitz, 'Addressing the Balance from Within', *Ha-'Aretz*, (28 July 1999) [Internet English edition of Hebrew daily].

<sup>86</sup> Meron Benvenisti, 'Gaza as an Exotic Place', *Ha-'Aretz*, (26 March 1999) [Internet English edition of Hebrew daily].

<sup>87</sup> Mathew Kalman, 'Israelis Use High Tech to Track Palestinians', *Globe and Mail*, (30 March 1999), p. A-19 [Canadian daily].

is being prepared in order to screen foreign workers entering Israel, and Palestinian citizens travelling through the newly agreed upon passage between the West Bank and Gaza. Here too Israel will be in charge of installing and operating the technology.<sup>88</sup> As well, Israeli army personnel control (behind one-way mirror) Gaza's airport which is ostensibly located in Palestinian territory, and Israel will be responsible for monitoring Gaza's sea port, if and when the port is built.

Finally, the third example of control technology governing border crossing comes from the Jordan River's Allenby Bridge separating Jordan and Israel. It offers what one commentator called 'a dazzling apparition, the ultimate phantasmagoria' in virtual reality.<sup>89</sup> At issue here is the manner in which the movement of incoming Palestinians, who are about to cross the Allenby Bridge from Jordan, on their way to the West Bank and Gaza, is regulated by Israel and the PA. Levy describes in minute detail how the presence of border control by the PA conceals the exercise of real power by Israel. The Palestinian border police operate in what Levy calls 'virtual spaces' where only Palestinian officials in charge of passport control are visible and come in contact with the Palestinian population. After receiving the travel documents from Palestinians crossing the border, and instead of carrying out the usual inspection before returning the documents to their bearers, the Palestinian police pass on the passports to be processed by Israeli border inspectors who operate incognito behind one-way mirrors. It is the Israelis who have the ultimate decision in allowing or not allowing Palestinians to cross the border. According to Levy, the reasons for this 'virtuality' are due to three factors: the Oslo accords, which stipulate that there be no contact between Palestinian travellers and Israeli police; Israel's insistence that as the wielder of power in this equation it should remain in charge of the border for security reasons; and being conscious of the need to maintain a modicum of dignity for the Palestinian personnel at the border crossing, the Israelis concede to the Palestinians a symbolic role of authority by removing themselves from public view. It must be pointed out, however, that in discussing the matter with Palestinians who routinely cross the Allenby Bridge, it was pointed out to me that travellers were fully aware of the 'apparition' practised on them. It was pointed out that the silhouette of the Israeli border police behind the one-way mirror is transparent to the traveller during the evening and late hours of the day. One can argue that in the long run, the so-called concern for maintaining the dignity of the Palestinian police, through the use of a Goffmanesque<sup>90</sup> form of front- and back-stage management, might in the long run exacerbate the situation by deepening the disrespect and cynicism held by the Palestinian population towards the PA.

<sup>88</sup> Einal Fishbain, 'All New Workers to Get Magnetic ID Cards by 2000', *Ha-Aretz*, (6 October 1999) [internet English edition of Hebrew daily].

<sup>89</sup> Gideon Levy, 'Twilight Zone. More than Meets the Eye', *Ha-'Aretz*, (3 September 1999), p. 7 [English edition of Hebrew daily, magazine section].

<sup>90</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

## Conclusion

Land and demography are at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the attempts by each side at State construction. This article has outlined several aspects of State construction, from discursive practices involving population count to the use of surveillance techniques in the control of space—both internal and external to the State. Several examples were offered bearing on population and refugee estimates, categorization of people, population movement, and spatial control. A Palestinian-Israeli dialectic of State construction is at play here, a dialectic which began more than a century ago and is still unfolding. This article shows how the Israeli State construction is inextricably bound up with the Palestinian project. The fact that these are two asymmetrical projects in terms of power relations does not alter the nature of the process. By being the weaker side in this encounter, the Palestinian effort has aimed at adopting practices in population count which are aimed at countering Israeli designs. As the Palestinians embark on State construction, it is evident that population management, in addition to the now familiar spatial control, will emerge as an area where contest will loom large, but it is an area where Israel will use its sheer military and economic power to effect Palestinian containment through both discursive and non-discursive practices.