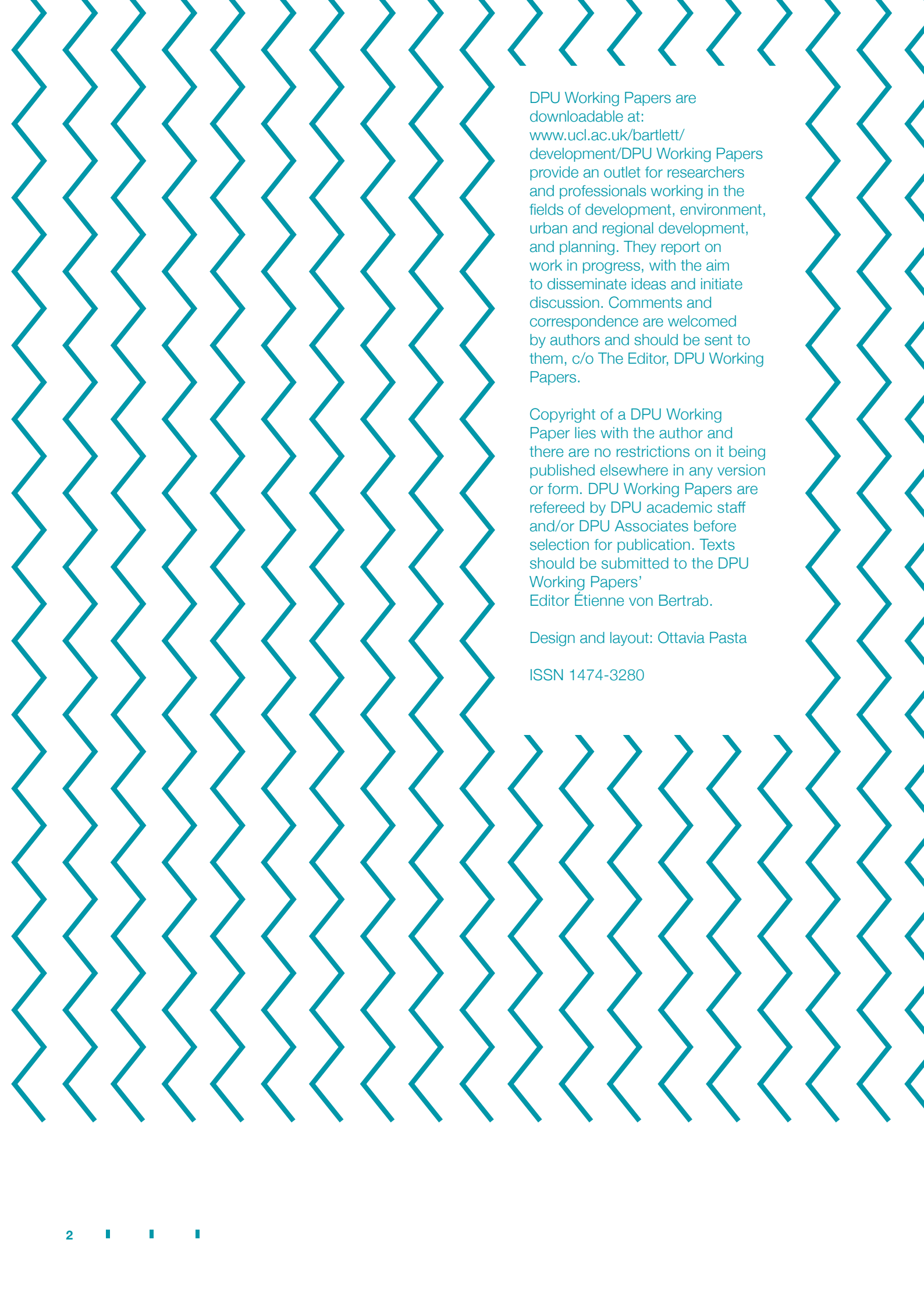


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Working Paper
April 2022

Home as a place of
resistance: Radical care
practices of determination,
the case of East Jerusalem

By Carlotta Trippa

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Design and layout: Ottavia Pasta

ISSN 1474-3280

Home as a place of resistance: Radical care practices of determination, the case of East Jerusalem

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Abstract

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14th September 2020 /
reviewed for DPU working paper
23th March 2022

As a result of over fifty years of occupation, Palestinian housing infrastructure in East Jerusalem is undergoing a dramatic crisis. Because construction permits are released by the Israeli government with an ethnic bias, Palestinian people build houses in lack of a legal permit and risk the threat of demolition in order to make a home in their city. With every-year raising numbers of home demolitions ordered by the Israeli regime, the contested nature of the city is traumatically affecting families, individuals and communities' experience of the domestic.

Within this context, this paper uses feminist geography, sociology and critical design theories to understand Palestinian families' forms of resistance practiced during the process of home demolition. The research articulates around the triad of care, radicality and infrastructure, to open new perspectives on the state and development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and at the same time learning from it. Following a dialectic Gramscian framing of political and hegemonic regimes, the analysis will be divided into two main sections respectively corresponding to a reading of Israeli dominant power forces and exercise (chapter 3), and Palestinian counter-forces of subaltern resistance through the stories of three families who faced home demolition (chapter 4).

Beyond the more represented episodes of military resistance, there are either conscious or unconscious counter-forces at play within the space of the home driven by feelings of affection, protection and hope and manifested by practises of caring and maintaining a certain living environment in the midst of injustice. Based on this acknowledgment, this Working Paper argues that these overlooked forms of spatial protest happening at the scale of the domestic are equally responsible for shaping the course of the conflict, intersecting with the uneventful practices of everyday maintaining and repairing a mode of inhabitancy.

“At times home is nowhere. At times one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place that which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting.”

“Our struggle is a struggle of memory against forgetting”.

(hooks, b. 1989: 19)

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Palestinian families build, demolish, and rebuild homes elsewhere, not as a response to the Occupation, but because even in the midst of injustice, life goes on. Therefore, resistance at the Palestinian margins is nuanced and intersects with the uneventful practices of everyday maintaining and repairing a form of inhabitancy.

01. Introduction

“The first hammer blow feels like you’re hitting yourself” tells Azzam Afifi while describing the events of the day he self-demolished his home in East Jerusalem (Al Jazeera, 2014). Unfortunately, this is not a separate event, but an increasingly common scene in the Palestinian community, where buildings lacking Israeli permits are deemed illegal and condemned to demolition. But construction permits are released with an ethnic bias and Palestinian families, like Azzam’s, have no other options but to violate the law in order to make a home in their city. When Palestinians receive the final demolition order, they have to choose between paying a 15,000 USD fine or to self-demolish their own home. Many are forced to painfully accept the second option, financially unable to afford the fee. The Israeli NGO B’Tselem (2020) reports that since 2004 Israel has demolished 1,063 Palestinian housing units, leaving a total of 3,459 people homeless, including 1,847 minors. Of these demolitions, 211 were carried out by the owner. And every year, the staggering numbers increase.

NOTE 01

In the English language, the term “grammar” is mostly used in the field of linguistics. The use that this working paper will make of it, borrows from the Italian language that uses it also in other contexts, including spatial theories, to refer to a system or structure taken as consisting of a wholesome morphology. In simpler words, it can be read as a synonym of “city”, or “urban environment”, or “urban entity”, etc.

Meanwhile, the state of Israel replaces the void left by Palestinians’ forced displacement, by steadily promoting the construction of illegal settlements on Arab land, breaching international agreements and laws. Since the 1967 illegal annexation, East Jerusalem’s spatial grammar¹ has been manipulated by the state of Israel, as part of a national agenda that envisions a unified Jewish state with the Holy City as its capital. Israeli power operates in space, transforming it to its advantage, and Jerusalem results as a governmental apparatus shaped and manipulated as part of a wider political project (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2003). Thus, there is no ontological separation between construction and destruction, and the tools of architecture serve the violent logic of power (Weizman, 2017). Palestinian Jerusalemites face the daily struggle of dwelling in an urban reality that is formally designed to facilitate their exodus. Yet, as Azzam’s sentence suggests, there are more forces underway.



FIGURE 1.1

The first hammer blow.

Source: Al Jazeera (2014)

NOTE 02

In this paper, the use of this term is informed by bell hook's (1989) notion of margin as a "place of radical openness", referring to a state that is not only physical, but also economic, social, and political, and contains transformative and subversive potential.

In Palestinian Arabic, the word *beit* means both "house" and "home", and it is used as a toponym by adding the name of a family that inhabits a certain building, unravelling a form of inhabitation where the material and the affective intersect (Amrov, 2017). The aim of this paper is to understand Palestinian homes within the reality of the conflict—because of its pervasiveness, it would be impossible to do otherwise—but also beyond it. The Israeli-Palestinian context catalyses public attention when a major event fills up the space of our news feed, and tendencies to overlook at this territory reduce Palestinian lives to an extension of the conflict. But Palestinian families build, demolish, and rebuild homes elsewhere, not as a response to the Occupation, but because even in the midst of injustice, life goes on. Therefore, resistance at the Palestinian margins² is nuanced and intersects with the uneventful practices of everyday maintaining and repairing a form of inhabitation. When the Occupation power both physically and metaphorically enters the space of the home, it does not encounter either a void or a military reaction, but rather a practice of inhabitation driven by the inevitable force of care.

Methodologically, I approach the space of the home through the feminist notion of care. The next chapter will engage with a reclamation of care practices and discourses (Puig, 2017) joining the feminist Marxist argument on recognition (Federici, 2020) with the ethics debate on distribution (Smith, 1998; Tronto, 1993 cited in Puig, 2020) to unravel the potentialities of *thinking through care* as a political project (Raghuram, 2016) and a form of collective action (Hobart and Kneese, 2020). Then, I will further spatialise care at the scale of housing (Power & Mee, 2020), understanding its fundamental role within inhabitation (Boano & Astolfo, 2020; Lancione, 2020). In the subsequent chapter I analyse the exercise of Israeli power through "ethnocracy" (Yiftachel, 2006) and spatialise it at the urban scale. Finally, in chapter four, I concentrate on Palestinian care counter-strategies to Israeli repressive spatial policies. I will enter the scale of the home by relying on the voices of Azzam, Sahar, and Daoud's families, who had to carry out self-demolition, as told by Al Jazeera's documentary "Jerusalem Hitting Homes" (2014). Their stories will provide a point of departure to trace the roots of informality through Palestinian processes of home-making and care infrastructures of families.

Care is a fundamentally feminist concept and refers to all practices and discourses aimed at the preservation of the life of a certain environment.

02. Within and beyond the home: care as a political project

bell hooks (1989), in the context of American systemic racism, tells the history of black women commuting every morning to take care of 'white folks' houses', to then go back to the margins to take care of their homes. Outside the house they would practice care labour within patriarchal white supremacist society, and then be responsible for maintaining the space of their domestic household because of a sexist distribution of gender roles. But hooks (1989: 383), while narrating the struggle of black women, just like her mother and grandmother, recalls her own childhood experience of feeling safe in the "homeplace", in contrast with the outside "terrifying whiteness". Black women were thus able to appropriate their conventional role as caregivers and use it in a transformative way to produce a sense of home to restore dignity and affirm identity in the face of poverty and brutal racist oppression. She calls this effort "a radically subversive political gesture" (ibid: 384) because it allowed throughout African-American history to identify the home as a site of resistance and liberation struggle, not only for individuals and families, but also for black civil rights movements. Black communities, being invisibilised, rejected and even threatened by the public, used houses as headquarter for meeting and organising, relying on the domestic as a safe space for nurturing and mobilising resistance. Thus, the home is the place where affective relations and feelings of belonging can be nurtured but also identity and political resistance can be facilitated in the face of struggles.

Care is a fundamentally feminist concept and refers to all practices and discourses aimed at the preservation of the life of a certain environment. Joan Tronto, who in the early 90s initiated the discussion around the ethics of care, defines it as “*everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair “our world” so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web*” (1993: 103, cited in Puig, 2017). From such fundamental elucidation, care stands as a dynamic vital force necessary to the act of sustaining life, holding together human and nonhuman bodies.

Maria Puig (2017: 5) conceives care as the everyday “concrete work of maintenance” existing through an ontological relational status of interdependency between subjects. By relying on the general definition by Tronto (1993), she unpacks the obligations and agencies of care based on the affective, ethico-political, and concrete dimensions. The intellectual gesture that Puig (2017: 11) defines as “*reclaiming care*” aims to acknowledge the tendencies to either romanticise, invisibilise, diminish or neglect care as a situated practice, in order to unravel its transformative potential as a life-sustaining web and embrace *thinking through care* as political project (Boano & Astolfo, 2020; Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Power & Mee, 2020; Puig, 2017; Raghuram, 2016).

2.1 The hard work of care: the feminist struggle for recognition

The struggle for recognition of the practice of care has been at the heart of the feminist debate and activism. The relationship between the caregiver and the care-receiver has been discussed in relation to political, economic, and cultural forces, alongside with gender, class, and race. Since “the work of care has a cumulative impact [that] requires attentiveness and fortitude over innovation” (Hobart and Kneese, 2020: 7), tendencies to overlook it urge to be clearly distinguished in the process of *reclaiming*.

**Capitalist modernity labels
housework as unproductive because
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the market; the workforce.**

In the early 70s, a Marxist feminist approach was used to challenge patriarchal power structures and moral obligations that presented reproductive labour as an act of love expected only from women and relegated to the domestic space (Fig. 2.1). Intellectual productions like “Counter-planning from the kitchen” (Cox & Federici, 1975) transformed the home into a site of resistance to patriarchal capitalism, arguing the demand for retribution of domestic and reproductive labours. Capitalist modernity labels housework as unproductive because it is irreducible to the logics of mechanisation, without taking into account that the hard work of care is actually responsible for reproducing the most precious commodity appearing on the market; the workforce (ibid). Therefore, care as the practice that reproduces life, holds a fundamental role in reproducing societies at large. Silvia Federici (2020: 19), one of the main exponents of such current, refers to housework as “*il lavoro nascosto*”—the hidden labour. What she argues is that within the capitalist system, where salary represents the expression of power relations, the demand for retribution is a fundamental process to recognising and revealing the forcibly hidden value of care practices.

FIGURE 2.1

Flyer from the Wages for housework's campaign

Source: New York Wages for Housework Committee (1975)

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

NOTICE TO ALL GOVERNMENTS

The women of the world are serving notice. We clean your homes and factories. We raise the next generation of workers for you. Whatever else we may do, we are the housewives of the world. In return for our work, you have only asked us to work harder.

We are serving notice to you that we intend to be paid for the work we do. We want wages for every dirty toilet, every painful childbirth, every indecent assault, every cup of coffee and every smile. And if we don't get what we want, then we will simply refuse to work any longer.

We have brought our children to be good citizens and to respect your laws and you have put them in factories, in prisons, in ghettos and in typing pools. Our children deserve more than you can offer and now we will bring them up to EXPECT more.

We have borne babies for you when you needed more workers, and we have submitted to sterilization when you didn't. Our wombs are not government property any longer.

We have scrubbed and polished and oiled and waxed and scoured until our arms and backs ached, and you have only created more dirt. Now you will rot in your own garbage.

We have worked in the isolation of our homes when you needed us to and we have taken on a second job too when you needed that. Now we want to decide WHEN we work, HOW we work, and WHO we work for. We want to be able to decide NOT TO WORK AT ALL --like you.

We are teachers and nurses and secretaries and prostitutes and actresses and childcare workers and hostesses and waitresses

and cooks and cleaning ladies and workers of every variety. We have sweated while you have grown rich. Now we want back the wealth we have produced. WE WANT IT IN CASH, RETROACTIVE AND IMMEDIATELY. AND WE WANT ALL OF IT.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

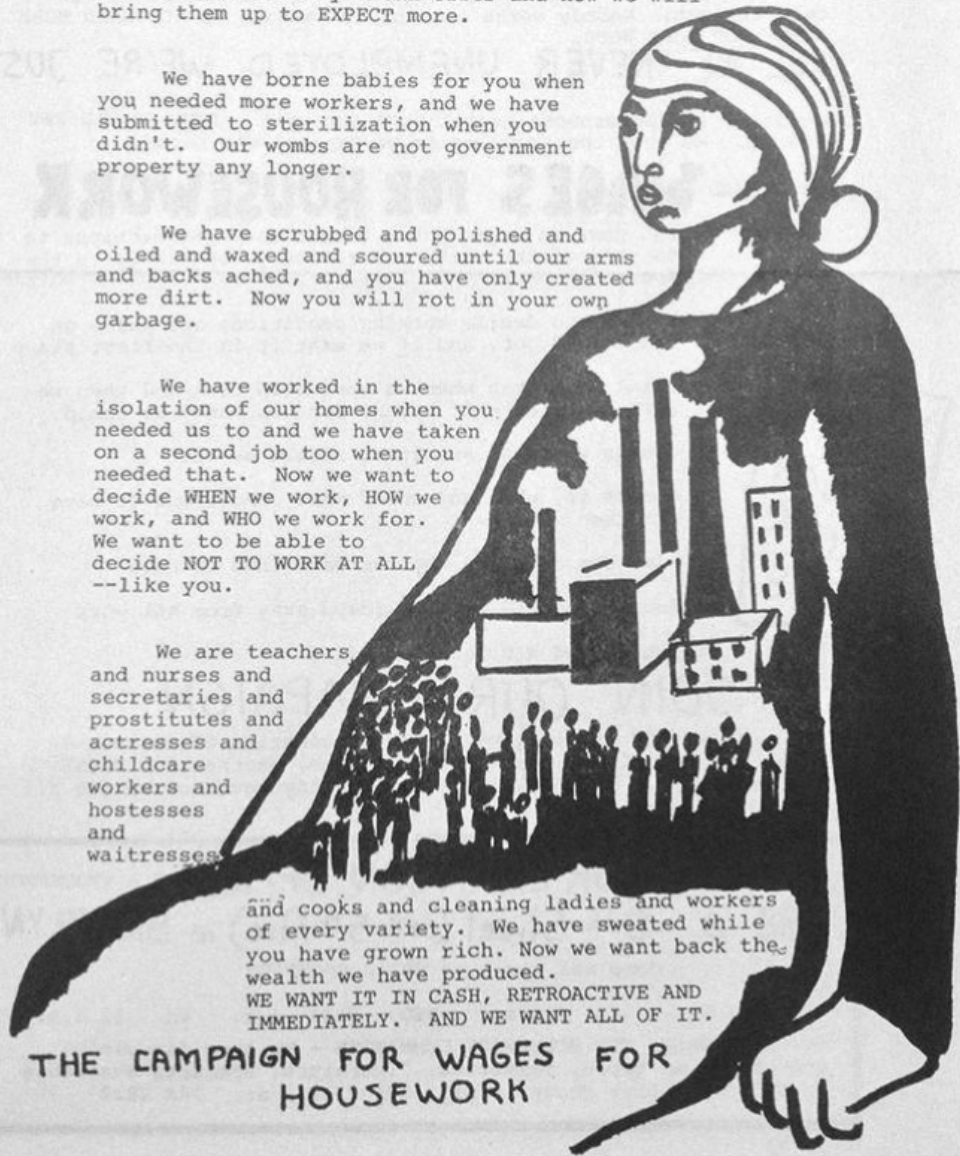




FIGURE 2.2

The hard work of care

Source: Alfonso
Cuarón (2018)

More than forty years later, their argument is still extremely relevant, and useful to expand the geography of inequalities in relation to care labours within societies immersed in globalisation. As Federici (2020) recently debated, challenging the patriarchal system of wage distribution and defining domestic labour as a phase of capitalist production, is proposed as a strategy to reframe female identity and agency, but also to fight capitalism within its functioning and extend the struggle for recognition to other forms of exploitation that are not only based on gender. As she lays out (Federici, 2004: 48), “the capitalist bias in favour of production” also carries racist and colonial connotations, which implies the need to expand the geography of *care as a struggle* beyond the home, but also beyond the Global North (Raghuram, 2016).

The intellectual gesture of rethinking care outside the home, the private, and the feminine, might only partially challenge its spatiality, if not situated within a specific geopolitical dimension (Smith, 1998). For example, as Raghuram (2016) points out, women’s emancipation from the housework left a void that was partially replaced by the migratory movement of women from the Global South to supply the needs of the Global North. Domestic workers hold an important share in global wage employment, yet they have limited if not non-existent access to rights and legal protection (International Labour Office, 2013). This is just one relevant example that can help portray how the struggle inside the home still deserves attention as an issue of public concern happening across different scales.

Thus, for care to be prioritised as “a political project and a public issue of wider concern to society” (Raghuram, 2016: 515), its practice needs to be contextualised in a wider scheme of structural inequalities and take into account not only issues of recognition, but also of redistribution, that do not only include gender, but also class and race.

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2.2 The issue of distribution: anaesthetised democracy and institutional neglect

The domestic space is not a vacuum but a continuation of the public, subjected to fields of power (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). In other words, power forces operating within public spheres do not stop at private front doors, but they enter, influencing the relational and spatial dynamics of the private. Equally and vice versa, the domestic plays a crucial part into the shaping of societies at large because it contributes as well to either facilitate or hinder reproduction of socio-economic structures, while forging individual and collective identity. Thus, the dichotomy of public/private conceived as two detached entities that should be looked at approached and tackled as separate domains of influence is illusory, but also instrumental and exclusionary when reflecting certain powers' agenda.

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Such a passage was crucial to the feminist debate advocating for the private as a matter of public concern, in order to challenge what constitutes the private and the criteria used to exclude certain issues from the public sphere rather than others in relation to the framing of the ethico-political dimension of care and its distribution, meaning: how should individuals and institutions care, and to what extent?

Smith (1998) who writes from the field of moral philosophy, relates it to a condition of physical and emotional proximity of subjects, in the sense that we learn to care from our own experience and that of those who are directly close to us, understanding mutual needs, struggles and desires, and through a process of empathetic *similarisation*³, we can learn to care and take care of those who are distant. Joan Tronto (2020: 44) describes it, as "care requires that we see the world from someone/something else's perspective", a process that starts with curiosity and humility. And because all humans fundamentally need care, Smith (1998) posits care as a moral value that should be equally distributed and provided. Yet, also in his argument we find an approach leaning towards contextualisation: morality necessitates to be positioned in relation to geography since moral norms and boundaries vary between societies.

Another relevant perspective on the ethics of care is offered by Donatella di Cesare (2020, translated from Italian) who recently laid out the concept of "immune democracy", referring to the diffuse neoliberal mode of governance that articulates the contemporary global political landscape. She reflects on how the recent COVID-19 crisis shed light on the social apartheid produced by the liberalist formula of "*noli me tangere*"⁴, in which the institution of democracy is confined within the sovereignty of nation states, responsible for providing protection and immunity to everyone, rather than freedom. But, as she argues, the concept of everyone is constantly reducing in terms of space, assuming the form of enclaves inside Western societies and cutting of global peripheries. Therefore, how can one be able to activate Smith's (1998) process of caring on the base of proximity if materiality and visibility between subjects is obstructed not only by a mere geographical distance but also by power forces reproducing such an exclusionary aesthetic agenda?

NOTE 03

The term "similarisation" finds its roots in sociological studies and refers to the process through which other/s becomes constitutive material of our being or become similar, in some respects, to how other/s sees us.

NOTE 04

Latin expression commonly assimilated by the Italian language, meaning "do not touch me".

Immunity leads to anaesthesia, justifying indifference in the face of injustice, and reducing the ethics of care to an individual moral choice (Di Cesare, 2020), that “reserves care for those deemed worthy” (Hobart and Kneese, 2020: 8), instead of recognising it as political responsibility (Raghuram, 2016). But “care cannot be separated from its deeply political place” (Tronto, 2020: 43) and the observation of how institutional infrastructures allocate care to certain groups rather than others, can be used as a means to unravel power dynamics and address issues of social justice (Hobart and Kneese, 2020). As Hobart and Kneese suggest (2020: 8), “care unevenly distributed cannot be disentangled from structural racism and inequalities”. Therefore, as a constant and fundamental feature of life, and thus societies at large, care produces an impact even in its absence (Puig, 2017).

In relation to the increase of systemic inequalities and institutional neglect produced by authoritarian right-wing regimes across the globe, Hobart and Kneese (2020: 2) observe the rising of care and self-care being performed as counterstrategy to the increase of systemic inequalities and institutional neglect produced by such systems of power across the globe that “threaten already vulnerable communities”. They define this phenomenon as radical care, meaning “a set of vital but underappreciated strategies to endure precarious worlds” (ibid: 2), emerging in the form of collective action. The notion of radicality here tends towards those elements of the fundamental that challenge the contemporary individualistic capitalist mindset: with infrastructural and institutional failure, care is mobilised by collective means of protection and preservation of the human and non-human subjects belonging to a certain living environment (Tronto, 2020). Thus, the transformative potential of care is nested in its being a life-sustaining web (Puig, 2017), and the echo of its positive impact reverberates, “span[ning] a breadth of localities: selves, communities, and social worlds” (Hobart and Kneese, 2020: 2).

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2.3 An infrastructure of care: radical housing as a politics of determination

The interconnected form of care allowed urban studies to rethink and expand the spatiality of the home as a dynamic pattern shaping societies. Power and Mee (2020: 485) conceive “housing as a care infrastructure [that] seeks to forge connections between care, housing and home through centring care within an analysis of the house-as-home”, joining the feminist ethics of care and the ‘infrastructural turn’ introduced by Amin in the field of geography (2014). To analyse cities through infrastructures is instrumental in understanding urban entities beyond their materiality, as a lively assemblage shaped by everyday encounters, intersections, negotiations, and interactions (Simone, 2010). But also as a means to unravel fields of power and social differences in class, race or gender, based on the infrastructural use and provision (Wilson, 2016). Power and Mee (2020: 499) articulate their argument following a path that starts with questioning the issue of care distribution according to “housing materiality, market and governance” and then frame these findings in relation to social inequality. Finally, they analyse how care flows through the housing infrastructure, both as a practice and a discourse, building a clear conceptual link between human and nonhuman subjects within the house-as-home. Their framework is fundamental to heft the recognition process of ‘home as a place of struggle’ to the larger scale of the urban.

Care flows through the housing infrastructure, both as a practice and a discourse, building a clear conceptual link between human and nonhuman subjects within the house-as-home.

1.6 billion people today live in a condition of inadequate housing, meaning “poor physical condition, overcrowding, poor access to services and to city functions and employment opportunities”, and not including the numbers of those families and groups that do not have access to housing at all (UN Habitat, 2016: 51). The numbers are overwhelming and urge the need to rethink the ‘housing future’ of our cities. Especially if we consider housing as “central to the right to the city” (Boano & Astolfo: 2020, 4). What Lancione (2020) proposes—and it is as atypical as innovative—is to not shy away from these numbers, but to build a new epistemology of housing starting exactly from those places that are considered as uninhabitable (Simone, 2016), “[y]et, they are there, alive and kicking” (Lancione, 2020: 2). This new epistemology is based on a feminist and decolonial agenda that seeks “for ‘radical housing’ within the everyday practices of dwelling at the margins [...] understood as a site of resistance [...] against housing precarity [...], emerging from uncanny places, uninhabitable ‘homes’ and multiple violent histories” (Lancione, 2020: 3). Resistance is not defined according to a specific classification, but it rather coincides with the rupture of a habitual form of dwelling, opening to a new form of ‘dwelling as difference’. These two forms are both mundane and political, because “to dwell is to hold together, as a way of being in the world while caring, both the status quo and the potential to break through it” (Lancione, 2020: 7). Within the concept of radical housing, radical care -as defined by Hobart and Kneese (2020)- holds a central role, by being the constitutive practice of this process of determination.

Housing as an infrastructure of care can be applied as an analytical tool to advocate for care distribution, but also to unravel the potentialities contained in life at the margins, conceived as places of resistance and radical openness (hooks, b. 1989). Boano and Astolfo (2020: 15), in response to Lancione's essay, go further and lay out a framework for "inhabitation as more than dwelling" to envision a form of "affirmative life", in which care stands as the pivotal concept to "think housing as an extended territory". Their approach to inhibition unfolds at the intersection of the practices of caring, repairing, and imagining. Care as a concrete practice "of the everyday and the uneventful" is responsible for "shaping, forming and negotiating vital politics" (ibid: 15) and fundamental to the activation of the process of repairing. In fact, care is present both in the activation and throughout the maturation of the process of repairing that essentially consists in fixing something characterised by a certain level of brokenness. The practice of repairing does not always require an institutional presence or a professional level of knowledge because "[e]veryone can, should, and generally does, repair in some form" (Boano & Astolfo, 2020: 16). Finally, the practice of imagining is presented as a decolonial suggestion to approach inhabitation not as a rubric, but as an anthology of dwelling that allows different forms of being-in-the-world to feed the way we envision and think of our shared future.

2.4 Analytical framework: practising care in East Jerusalem

This paper will explore the triad of care, radicality and infrastructure by learning from the process of Palestinian house demolitions in East Jerusalem. The city was chosen for both political and emotional reasons: Israeli long-lasting violent colonisation of Palestine lead to a mainstream misrepresentation of Palestinian lives, reduced to either terrorists or martyrs. By relying on the words and narratives of those experiencing their home's demolition, this working paper aims to shed light on the nuances hidden behind such a dichotomy, that is not only limitative but also instrumental. Beyond the mainstream gaze, there are forces at play within Palestinian homes that inform an alternative narrative to military resistance and bring back to those radical elements of the fundamental that are tied to caring practices of maintaining and repairing a living environment in the midst of injustice, through acts of love, hope and affection.

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With a staggering shortage of 25,000 housing units, raising numbers of home demolitions, issues of overcrowding, and poor access to basic services, the Palestinian housing infrastructure in East Jerusalem is undergoing a dramatic crisis, inextricably tied to the contested status of the city and the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, since the Six Days War in 1967, the state of Israel has been unlawfully occupying the Palestinian territory of East Jerusalem and applying its law, jurisdiction, and administration, in violation of international law. Palestinians still claim the right on Jerusalem to be the capital of the future state of Palestine, yet only Israel holds the power to shape institutions and use it to its advantage, facilitating and strengthening Israeli control over Palestinian lands, homes, and freedom of movement. But when Israeli exercise of power enters the space of the home it encounters a force driven by practises of “caring, repairing and imagining” (Boano and Astolfo, 2020) Palestine beyond the project of the Occupation. The discourse on reclamation that I laid out in the first part of this chapter was fundamental to think of the potentialities of care within and beyond the home. I will think of Palestinian families as an infrastructure of care able to endure through the precarious reality of the context and create a sense of home even in the midst of injustice, and how these practices shaped the urban grammar of East Jerusalem. In order to approach the housing context, I will lay out a framework that is informed by Power and Mee’s approach to housing as a care infrastructure (2020) and divide the analysis into two parts that deal with, respectively, the dominant forces and counterforces that shape Palestinian dwelling experience in East Jerusalem.

The first part is focused on the analysis of fields of power and how they reflect on the practice of urban governance within the housing infrastructure system, in order to unravel the roots of social injustice. In this sense I will rely on the concept of *Ethnocracy* (Yiftachel, 2006), to engage with the analysis of Israeli geographical, political, and economic exercise of power over Palestinian land, outlined as an extension of a specific colonial project, that from now on I will refer to as Zionism⁵. Because *ethnocracy* is informed by a Gramscian dialectic form of power (Q 19 § 24 § 25) that articulates on an ethnic basis—Jewish/dominant classes vis à vis Arab subaltern classes—I will interchangeably refer to the two population groups as Israeli/Jewish and Palestinian/Arabs (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2003). Consequently, based on the theories on “urban ethnocracy” (ibid) that apply the national ethnic bias in favour of the Jewish population to the criteria of urban governance, I will analyse the legal and planning apparatus that regulates and hinders Palestinian housing development, to frame the relation between urban governance in terms of housing infrastructure and issues social inequality.

NOTE 05

The term Zionism was coined in the late 19th century to refer to the religious, ideological and political movement advocating for the creation of an independent Jewish state in the Palestinian territories, coinciding today with the repression of the Palestinian self-determination movement (Treccani, 2020, Sionismo).

I will unfold the second part of the analysis in the pursuit of approaching the physical and metaphorical means deployed by Palestinians to create a dimension of home within the context and draw an intersection between practises of radical care and forms of resistance. I will approach this fundamental part by learning from the voices of Sahar Shareef, Azzam Afifi and Daoud Said, three Palestinians who went through the painful process of self-demolishing their homes, as told by Al Jazeera’s documentary “Jerusalem Hitting Homes” (2014). Because of the extreme difficulty in obtaining construction permits, Palestinian families build houses in violation of Israeli law, consciously knowing that they will coexist with the constant threat of demolition. This phenomenon resonates with the situated notion of “spatial protest” (Yacobi, 2004) that I will expand with that of “radical care” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). The choice of building in lack of a permit is not always performed as a conscious antagonistic act against the occupation, but rather as a form of dwelling sustained by identarian principles of belonging to the city. The rupture in the habitus of dwelling is activated when eventually Arab families receive a demolition order and develop a form of “dwelling as difference” (Lancione, 2020), fuelled by the practises of caring, repairing and imagining (Boano & Astolfo, 2020) Palestine beyond materiality. These counterstrategies are enrooted in Palestinian processes of place-making that operate like an infrastructure of care, which, at the urban scale, result in the phenomenon of informality as a form of “radical housing” (Lancione, 2020), that characterizes East Jerusalem spatial grammar.

While portraying itself as a democratic state, the Zionist ethnocratic regime facilitates ethnic segregation and marginalisation, which stands in clear opposition with modern democratic principles of equal rights, causing the rupture of the notion of demos.

03. Understanding fields of power: ethnocracy in East Jerusalem: a hegemonic urban governance

In 2001, the Palestinian hip-hop group DAM released one of their most famous songs titled "*Min Irhaby?*", meaning "who's the terrorist?". The song vividly describes the existing tension within the relative concept of illegality in the face of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Both sides have their own version of what is legal, claiming their right to the land and their political right to exist (Braverman, 2007). Yet, as the lyrics of the song go "I broke the law? No, the law broke me", one can truly grasp the reality of the conflict, which sees Palestinians having to face harsher consequences of this tension in everyday life.



FIGURE 3.1
 The Daily Star Lebanon.
 Frontpage from December
 6, 2017
 Source: Author

3.1 Brief introduction to a long-lasting conflict

According to international law, Jerusalem's territory is divided in two parts: the Arab East belonging to the Palestinians, and the Jewish West property of the state of Israel (B'Tselem, 1995). This separation is marked by the Green Line which was established after the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War and breached during the 1967 Six-Day War. Later, in 1980 Israel annexed East Jerusalem and declared it as the inalienable capital of the Jewish state. This gesture was tempestively followed by the UN Security Council Resolution 478 published in the same year, declaring Israeli violation of international law. Throughout almost a century, Israeli exercise of power in East Jerusalem—as well as Gaza, West Bank and the Golan Heights—has been repeatedly condemned by the international community for violating multiple rules of the international humanitarian law (Amnesty International, 2019). Palestinians still claim Jerusalem to be the capital of their future state, as stipulated by the 1949 Rhodes agreements. Yet, in 1980, Israel countered the international and Palestinian claims by creating a bureaucratic alternative to international law, which virtually legalised the illegality of the Occupation by inscribing the annexation within the Israeli Basic law (Yacobi, 2014). From then, it proactively shaped the morphology of East Jerusalem, using architecture as a weapon of the Zionist project, by building physical barriers—settlements, road infrastructures, and the Separation Wall—and demolishing Arab neighbourhoods, with the aim of legitimizing Jewish presence on the land (Weizman, 2007).

Palestinians' rights to Jerusalem are further hindered through the system of unequal citizenship, regulated by ethnic, spatial and economic components (Yiftahcel, 2006). Whereas Jews residing in East Jerusalem are by every means citizens of the Israeli state, Palestinians have only access to a "permanent residency"—the most privileged legal status released to Arabs not holding an Israeli citizenship (B'Tselem, 2019). This permit allows Palestinian to benefit from Israeli social and medical national insurance, work in the country and vote in local elections (ibid). Such status is the same released to foreign nationals who wish to reside in Israel, with the crucial difference that Palestinians have no other country to belong and return to (ibid). It is possible to apply for a permanent residency permit, but the process to obtain it is heavy, onerous, and positive results are not guaranteed (Al Jazeera, 2018). Furthermore, those who leave the city risk losing the permit and the social benefits that it holds. The Israeli NGO B'Tselem (2018) reports that since 1967, 14,643 residencies have been revoked to Palestinian Jerusalemites. The means deployed to revoke the permit are many. For example, in 2003, the Ministry of Interior passed a Law that establishes harsher restrictions on the issuing of permanent residencies concerning family reunification and child registration (B'Tselem & HaMoked, 2004). As a result, today a child born in the Occupied Territories cannot live in East Jerusalem if both parents are not Palestinian residents (ibid).

In terms of political representation, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is not allowed to take part to either the governance or planning system of East Jerusalem (Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing, 2014) and, since 1967, the Jewish state has represented the only ruling body, applying its law, jurisdiction and administration to the contested territories (B'Tselem, 1997). Palestinian Jerusalemites are entitled to vote for the municipal elections, but they usually refuse to, as a political statement against the Occupation. A bi-national framework of shared sovereignty envisions the future of the city as an equally ruled, administered and funded capital for both Israeli and Palestinian peoples, under the Jerusalem/al-Quds metropolitan area (Yacobi & Yiftachel, 2002). The establishment of a local democracy representing the two ethno-national entities, would benefit both parties on a political, social and economic level, and restore Palestinian's "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996) from Israeli discriminatory urban governance (Yacobi & Yiftachel, 2002). Yet, the current state of affairs is tragically leaving little hope for such a scenario.

3.2 The Zionist hegemony

Through a deep historical and political analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Israeli scholar Oren Yiftachel (2006) theorises the concept of "ethnocracy", conceived as the incremental expansion of the Jewish group over the contested territory. Its manifestation happens through processes of "Judaisation"—the promotion of Jewish expansion—and "de-Arabisation"—the contraction of Arab presence—of the geographical, political and economic space. Therefore, the Israeli ethnocratic regime is intended as a manifestation of the Zionist project, historically shaped by colonial, nationalistic and capitalist forces, that articulate through principles of ethnic association and territorial belonging. As a settler society, the Israeli state promotes discourses on 'demographic balance', that aim to assure a Jewish demographic majority over the contested land. The demographic balance is based on maintaining a ratio of 30:70 between the Arab and Jewish population, respectively. This is mainly achieved through migration policies, land distribution and pronatalism discourses. The conscious manipulation of population and geography "is unofficially referred to in Israeli circles as the 'silent transfer', [and it is defined as] a crime according to international law" (Weizman, 2007: 49).

Ethnocratic mechanisms of exclusion are founded on ethnonationalist discourses of self-determination and right to the homeland, built upon a manipulated interpretation of historical, religious and cultural dynamics (Yiftachel, 2006). While portraying itself as a democratic state, the Zionist ethnocratic regime facilitates ethnic segregation and marginalisation, which stands in

clear opposition with modern democratic principles of equal rights, causing the rupture of the notion of *demos*. The exercise of ethnocracy engenders the phenomenon of “creeping apartheid”, meaning the slowly but incremental strengthening of the formal power structures, based on an ethnic bias. The pervasiveness of this process manifests through a legal and planning system that influences the social, political, economic, and spatial aspects of everyday life. This inevitably leads to a reaction from Palestinian groups, dispossessed of their land, homes, resources, and freedom of movement.

The understanding of the Israeli regime as a Zionist ethnocracy highly resonates with the Gramscian framing of power dynamics (Yiftachel, 2006). In fact, Gramsci outlines the notion of hegemonic power in a dialectic and dynamic form, which conceives the political landscape being constantly shaped by the tension between dominant and subaltern groups (Q 19 § 24 § 25). Dominant classes hold decisional power over institutions, constituting a ruling body imposing political, intellectual and moral values on the whole of society. The subaltern as those groups belonging to civil society that are being denied access to power structures, characterised by the tendency to unification, systematically hindered by the governmental hegemony. The aim of dominant classes is to weld and manage power around a common objective knowledge amongst all social classes, which, in the context of Israel-Palestine, refers to the Zionist project. Based on a Gramscian framework, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is shaped by the tension between Israeli sovereignty and Palestinian subaltern resistance—two forces contemporarily at play and equally contributing to the dialectic of power. The manifestation of this tension is not only of military nature, but rather dramatically present in every aspect of life.

The process of “creeping apartheid” (Yiftachel, 2006) profoundly encompasses the most intimate dimension of life, to the extent that the act of generating it is perceived by some as an extension of the conflict itself.

As a result of Zionist obsession to maintain demographic balance, Palestinian and Israeli families are both subjected to biopolitical discourses around natalism (Kanaaneh, 2002). As a means to maintain a Jewish ethnic majority, ever since 1948 the state of Israel has encouraged Jewish families to grow in number (Ibid.). It is sufficient to observe the industry of assisted reproductive technology, in which the country holds a leading role on an international level (The New York Times, 2011). In vitro fertilisation procedures are provided as a free service for Jewish women and are responsible for nearly 4% of the annual population growth (Israeli Ministry of Health, 2013). Such policies are not apolitical and have been countered by Palestinian nationalistic strategies of pro-natalism (Kanaaneh, 2002). Palestinian families have often been referred to as a “demographic time bomb” and as Kanaaneh appoints, “some Palestinians have embraced the Arab time bomb as a form of resistance and have called for encouraging the natural increase in the [...] population” (Ibid: 61). As a result, the natural phenomenon of reproduction becomes the extension of a national political project perpetuated by both sides of the conflict, although driven by antithetical colonial forces. The struggle to keep a demographic majority led the conflict to enter the space of women’s bodies, “considered markers of national boundaries” (Ibid: 65). The process of “creeping apartheid” (Yiftachel, 2006) profoundly encompasses the most intimate dimension of life, to the extent that the act of generating it is perceived by some as an extension of the conflict itself.

3.3 Crafting a crisis: East Jerusalem housing infrastructure

Israeli national agenda is reflected at Jerusalem's municipal level, where the struggle to achieve the vision of the Holy City as the "eternal capital of the Jewish people" (Yacobi, 2012: 55) is epitomised through the notion of "urban ethnocracy" (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2003). As appointed by Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003: 678): "cities within ethnocratic societies can be analysed as 'urban regimes', in which the city itself (that is, its political and economic elites) is a key actor in the determination of local conflicts and resources allocation". Thus, space does not only represent the arena of the conflict, but also its main strategic weapon (Weizman, 2007), by relying on "urban planning mechanisms [that] have reformed the spatial grammar of [...] East Jerusalem" (Boano & Paquet, 2014: 17). The process of 'creeping apartheid' is shockingly visible on the urban fabric: through the incremental demolition of Arab neighbourhoods and the building of massive road infrastructures and Jewish settlements, Palestinian areas have been reduced to an archipelago of disjointed enclaves with limited access to basic infrastructures and services (Weizman, 2007), affecting economic development and reducing the population to economic hardship and psychological distress (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2012).

Palestinian areas have been reduced to an archipelago of disjointed enclaves with limited access to basic infrastructures and services, affecting economic development and reducing the population to economic hardship and psychological distress.

The discourse on 'demographic balance' translates into the "national and municipal obsession" (Bimkon, 2014: 8) to preserve the 30:70 ratio between Arabs and Jews (Chiodelli, 2012). This is exemplified by the 1967 annexation, when the Israeli State "incorporated approximately 69,000 Palestinians within the newly expanded boundaries of the previously western Israeli municipality of Jerusalem" (Weizman, 2007: 25), and proactively turned the ratio between Arabs and Jews into 26:74 respectively (Bimkon, 2014). Unable to stem Arab natural growth, the Jewish state seeks to maintain this proportion through the manipulation of the housing infrastructure (Chiodelli, 2019). In fact, as asserted by city engineer Elinoar Barzacchi in 1993: "There is a governmental decision to maintain the proportion between the Arab and Jewish populations in the city [...]. The only way to cope with that ratio is through the housing potential" (cit. in Weizman, 2007: 48). Since 1967 more than a third of the land privately owned by Palestinians has been expropriated by the state of Israel, to build 11 neighbourhoods for Jewish residents only, while incrementally limiting the amount of land available to Palestinians for building (B'Tselem, 2019). Thus, planning and building schemes targeting the housing infrastructure played a major role in nurturing the ethnocratic logic of power.

In "Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation", Eyal Weizman (2007: 48) engages with a sharp analysis of Israeli spatial politics, to unravel the Israeli discriminatory agenda underlying the technical contents "of almost every masterplan prepared for the city's development". The Zionist planning project is outlined by both horizontal and vertical limitations. Horizontally, the construction of Jewish settlements was planned in strategic locations so to fragment Palestinian footprint and prevent further expansion. Moreover, Israel designated 40% of East Jerusalem's territory for green areas where construction is forbidden. In the 2015 Al Jazeera's documentary "Jerusalem: Hitting Home", this aspect is discussed by both Zeyad Hamoori, a Palestinian working at the Jerusalem Socioeconomic Centre, and David Cohen, the former advisor of the Mayor of Jerusalem. The first one describes such politics as a tool to stock land for Jewish residential and infrastructural expansion, the second calls for Arab residents to stop building on public property, as it is affecting "the quality of life" (Al Jazeera, 2014). Finally, Palestinian expansion is vertically limited by the floor area ratio "to protect the traditional rural character of Palestinian villages" (Weizman, 2007: 50). From this reading, it becomes evident that the ultimate goal of the Zionist project is "preventing Jerusalem from functioning as a Palestinian city and making [it] harder to be a Palestinian in Jerusalem" (Weizman, 2007: 50).

Similar to Weizman, Francesco Chiodelli (2012), while breaking down the components of '2000 Jerusalem Master Plan', argues that planning documents can be approached "as a sort of "veil of Maya" disguising the real political aims pursued by the design of space" (Chiodelli, 2012: 8). Although it still has not been approved as a statutory document, waiting to pass through the public review, the masterplan has been adopted as an essential policy manual. The 'veil of Maya' is represented by discourses on "urban quality for all the residents" (Chiodelli, 2012: 9), while substantially outlining dissimilar strategies for the Arab and Jewish areas. In terms of housing provision, around 32,000 new housing units for Arab areas are contemplated in the plan, but the development of the already overcrowded Palestinian neighbourhoods is proposed by densification. Either way, this estimation would leave 100,000 Arab residents lacking appropriate housing and for the 15,000 unauthorised residential units that are home to thousands of families, no intent but demolition is delineated. It appears likely that, as suggested by Chiodelli (2012), the presence of illegal buildings will eventually serve as a technical pretext to refrain from providing the housing units promised within the plan. On the other hand, further Jewish residential development is expected through expansion. It is worth reiterating once again that according to International Law this intention, if accomplished, would be considered illegal (International Commission of Jurists, 2019).

Thus, what are the options available for Palestinians to legally make a home in East Jerusalem, if 30% of the land has been expropriated mainly to build Jewish settlements, 20% is allocated to green areas, and 30% is lacking a detailed plan that would allow for construction (UN OCHA oPt, 2011)? As Sara Kaminker reports: "According to the Town Planning and Building Law (1965), a building permit may be issued by the municipality to a landowner whose property is included in an approved town planning scheme that designates his land for residential use" (Kaminker, 1997: 8). As of today, only 12,7% of the land in East Jerusalem is allocated to Palestinian housing and community development needs, but not all of it is allocated for construction (Wari, 2011). In addition, procedures to obtain the permit are long, complex and onerous, and, as highlighted by Palestinian lawyer Ahmed Safadi (Al Jazeera, 2014), in the largest majority of cases either the municipality does not recognise the ownership of the land or the Ministry of Interior classifies it as unfit for building. The plight of construction in East Jerusalem is due to the discriminatory logic behind the regulation of building permits, which is demonstrated by numbers: since 1991, the Municipality has issued 21,834 permits to Israelis and only 9,536 to Palestinians (Peace Now, 2019). Meanwhile, the need for housing amounts to 25,000 units (Weizman, 2007).

In the Town Planning and Building Law, building without a licence is considered as a criminal offence (Margolit, 2007), to which Israel responds by adopting repressive measures and ordering the demolition of the unlawful construction

(Chiodelli, 2012). Yet, the bureaucratic and budgetary difficulties to obtain a building permit leads Palestinian families to act “unlawfully” in order to make a home in their city, and live under the constant threat of demolition. Amar, a Palestinian Jerusalemite whose illegal house was demolished by Israeli authorities, referred to himself as a “criminal without a choice” (Braverman, 2007: 337). When a demolition order is issued, Palestinian families are advised to hire professional figures like lawyers and architects that would assist them in the process of advocating for their case in court, meanwhile, they obtain a stay of proceeding that delays demolition until a definitive order gets issued (Margolit, 2007). This bureaucratic procedure usually lasts for years, taking the form of an exhausting back and forth between the owner and the municipality, causing economical and psychological repercussions for Palestinian families (ibid). When the family receives the final order, they can choose between paying a US \$15,000 fine to make Israeli authorities demolish their home, or do it by themselves (Al Jazeera, 2014). Many families, financially drained after a long-lasting fight against the municipality, painfully come to opt for the second choice.

Jerusalem’s legal and planning system appears as a constellation of red tapes and bureaucratic stratagems that makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain a construction permit in the Holy City. Once the “veil of Maya” (Chiodelli, 2012) is removed, the bitter truth/reality to be found is that “[f]or the Palestinian inhabitants [...], unlike the Jewish residents, hardly anything was ever planned but their departure” (Weizman, 2007: 47).

The bureaucratic and budgetary difficulties to obtain a building permit leads Palestinian families to act “unlawfully” in order to make a home in their city, and live under the constant threat of demolition.

Caring practises are essential to the sustenance of life, and certainly are not performed as a response to the Occupation, but they inevitably lie within a political dimension because they represent the core drive of those livelihoods that the regime aims to disrupt.

04. Care as a form of resistance

Whereas the term ‘mixed city’ is commonly used in the Israeli context to define the coexistence of Jewish and Arab populations within the urban boundaries of Jerusalem’s municipal jurisdiction, as outlined in the previous chapter, the dwelling experience of the two groups is substantially different and Palestinians are subjected to heavy spatio-political discrimination (Yacobi, 2004). In result, Arab marginalised groups counter ‘top-down’ ethnocentric planning policies with ‘bottom-up’ subaltern strategies of urban resistance, defined by Yacobi (2004: 73) as “spatial protests”, performed both consciously and unconsciously as “an alternative pattern of social opposition [...] reflecting personal and social needs that often contradict the interest of those in power”. For its paradigmatic uniqueness, the case of Jerusalem offers the emblematic expression to this phenomenon within the housing infrastructure, where the tension between dominant and subaltern groups materialises at different scales. In fact, Israeli settler colonialism operates from the scale of the urban to the home. The demolition of single housing units intensifies in the Old City and the surrounding areas, at the heart of the contested territory of Jerusalem, where the historical urban fabric is dense and loaded with political meaning (al-Jubeih, 2017). Sahar, Azzam and Daoud’s families (Al Jazeera, 2014) were forced to self-demolish their homes in the Old City because they lacked Israeli permits. Their stories will lead the way to trace the roots of the wider phenomenon of urban informality, connecting scales through the practice of care.

4.1 A home is a broken kitchen: voices from the demolition site

“Elsewhere in the world, people are encouraged to build homes. Here in Jerusalem, they tell us to destroy them” (Al Jazeera, 2014). Sahar Shareef is a Palestinian woman who is speaking from the ruins of her demolished house in East Jerusalem. Decades ago, she and her family decided to build their home without applying for a construction permit. From 1997, Sahar’s family started receiving demolition orders, which they managed to extend for seventeen years by paying costly fines and appealing in court. They had to take bank loans and overwork in order to pay the bills. As suggested by the Jerusalem authorities, they consulted lawyers, surveyors and architects who they paid to be told not to waste their time. Yet, they tenaciously advocated for their case against the municipality.

Meanwhile, Sahar took care of their home and raised her children, maintaining a sense of home despite the conditions of insecurity that she daily had to face. Through an exercise of imagination, we can picture her throwing buckets of water on the floor to refresh the air in the hot summer weather, or preparing coffee for the relatives in visit. Her son tells “I remember where I fell down and every single corner of this house. I recall when my parents gave me a wooden cot. It was like a cage”, then he adds “I played with it until it broke. [...] In the end, they bought me an iron bed.” (Al Jazeera, 2014). The life experiences that Sahar’s son is candidly recalling are enrooted in a sense of place built upon feelings of care and intimacy, embracing human and non-human objects. Sahar and her family made a *sense of home* that went beyond the physicality of the bricks and cement that Jewish law defined as illegal.

Sahar and her family made a sense of home that went beyond the physicality of the bricks and cement that Jewish law defined as illegal.

In 2014, they had to take the heart-breaking decision of self-demolishing their home, after being financially drained by seventeen years of fighting against the municipality and thus, unable to pay the steep Israeli fee. While telling her story to Al Jazeera she recalls the day of the demolition by saying that “it felt like the hammer was hitting [her] heart” (Al Jazeera, 2014), as a testimony that the cruelty inflicted on the nonhuman body of the house reverberates through the human bodies of its inhabitants. Her son remembers being woken up by a roaring sound. “I asked my father what he was doing. He said he had to demolish the wall, or he and my mum would be jailed. He said the Israelis would make our lives difficult. I took the hammer from him. With the first blow, I felt like crying” (Al Jazeera, 2014). Israeli spatial policy of disruption aims to invade the domestic space in order to manipulate the idea of home and associate it with feelings of dispossession and displacement (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005). Once the sense of place is ruptured, the family copes through a traumatic experience of loss that has to be contextualised as the last deafening physical and psychological aggression of a long-lasting period of uncertainty, insecurity and distress.

Sahar Shareef has decided to stay in East Jerusalem and she is now living with her family in the ruins of her demolished house. Sahar and her family fought against demolition for a protracted number of years, through steadfastness and determination, facing economic hardship, psychological distress, and hopelessness at times. Yet, they resisted and remained. We do not know if her decision is due to the financial incapacity to face relocation or to a conscious stance. Hence, it would be improper and indelicate to draw assumptions out of it. Still,

there is a precise image towards the end of the documentary that strikes the viewer's eye, for it epitomises the crucial role that care holds in enduring precarious realities. Surrounded by the rubbles of a lifetime, Sahar is busy cooking Ramadan dinner on a camping stove, practising one of the most nurturing and natural gestures that belong to the domestic space (fig. 4.1, 4.2). Despite the deeply hurtful experience of loss, Sahar promptly recreated a sense of home for her family, performing an act of care amidst the aftermath of the demolition. Such caring practises are essential to the sustenance of life, and certainly are not performed as a response to the Occupation, but they inevitably lie within a political dimension because they represent the core drive of those livelihoods that the regime aims to disrupt. Looking at the space around her, Sahar says "this is our kitchen now" (Al Jazeera, 2014).

Israeli spatial policy of disruption aims to invade the domestic space in order to manipulate the idea of home and associate it with feelings of dispossession and displacement.

FIGURE 4.1

A broken kitchen
Source: Al Jazeera (2014)





FIGURE 4.2

The first Ramadan after demolition

Source: Al Jazeera (2014)

Azzam Afifi's house was located on the third floor of a building near a mosque. He demolished it at night, to make sure no one would get hurt by the falling rubbles when joining the muezzin's call to prayer (Fig. 4.3). He also left the perimeter walls one metre tall, to ensure his kids' safety (Fig. 4.4). For this reason, he was called back to court. The judge deliberately misinterpreted his thoughtful gesture as an act of resistance to the demolition order, unashamedly ignoring the photographic material proving that Azzam's house was already reduced to rubble. Azzam was not intentionally performing a gesture of resistance, he was rather acting through an ethics of care, taking to heart his community and family's well-being, even in the process of forced destruction. "I showed him how high we were from street level. He said the wall was illegal. [...] I offered to show the judge photos of Israelis building [...]. They turned a two-room apartment into a whole building. He told me not to get involved in politics." (Al Jazeera, 2014). Azzam is aware of the policies of discrimination that he is subjected to. Because so deeply rooted in everyday life, the pervasive injustice of the 'creeping apartheid' ignites a sense of political awareness, making Palestinians highly politicised. This episode stands as a poignant metaphor of the conflict: on the one hand lies the Zionist exercise of power, facilitated by ethnocentric spatial policies, on the other hand Palestinian unconscious spatial protest fuelled by the genuine act of care. The rule of hegemony contaminates those aspects of human life that represent the essential domain of loving instincts, and resistance arises as the inevitable urge to preserve safety.

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FIGURE 4.3
Midnight demolition
Source: Al Jazeera
(2014)

FIGURE 4.4
The illegal wall
Source: Al Jazeera
(2014)



Palestinian spatial grammar has been torn by the protracted Occupation, but Palestinian images resist in the margins, as a testimony of collective identity of places.

When Palestinians painfully arrive at the decision to self-demolish their home, they are asked to submit visual proof to Israeli authorities. While showing these pictures on a computer screen, Azzam recalls the layout of what used to be his home (Fig. 4.5). “This was my daughters’ room. [...] The living room was here. [...] There was the kitchen and the boys’ room” (Al Jazeera, 2014). Beyond the image of destruction, the space he describes is still a home. To cling on that image—to consciously remember—is neither delusion nor denial, but a vicarious act of collecting and safeguarding a memory of places against the hegemonic intent to wipe them. Palestinian spatial grammar has been torn by the protracted Occupation, but Palestinian images resist in the margins, as a testimony of collective identity of places.



FIGURE 4.5
 Daughter's room
 Source: Al Jazeera
 (2014)

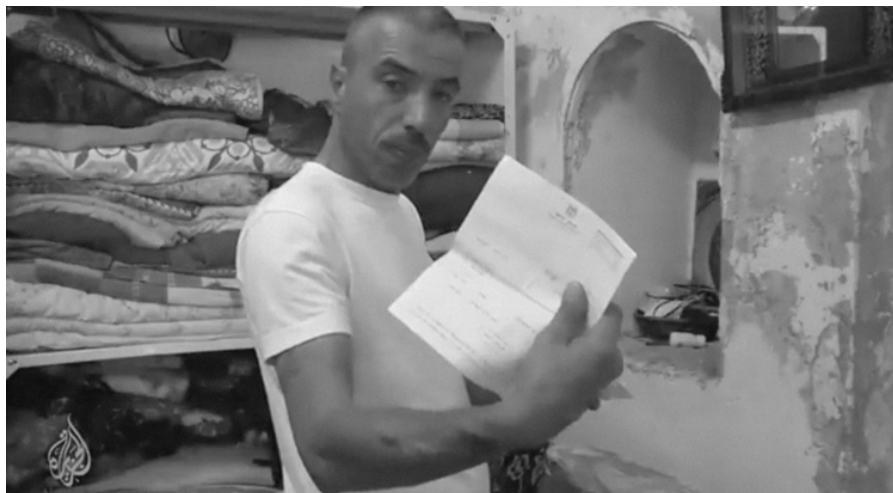
Today Azzam and his family live in a rented apartment in Al Assawiya, about fifty kilometres north of Jerusalem. To relocate away from his primary source of income and his family's livelihood implies an additional economic burden due to transportation costs that he has to sustain, while monthly earning a minimum wage of US \$1,400. "A lot of people live in the houses they've built. Why not us? Why should we demolish our houses? My daughter told me she dreamed we returned home and we rebuilt our house. I laughed and told her: *Inshallah..!*"⁶ (Al Jazeera, 2014). In spite of the harrowing circumstances, Azzam as a father, was able to provide his daughter a metaphoric space of hope, and a physical space of safety, even if a temporary one.

NOTE 06

Arabic term meaning "if Allah [God] wills", widely used in common language

Daoud Said is a father of seven children. His home was located at the last floor of a building whose windows offered a charming view of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, at the heart of the Old City. He had built it without a permit because his application was being repeatedly rejected. In a file container he keeps the documents attesting his fight against the municipality—a long history of resistance told under the form of municipal fines and court papers (Fig. 4.6). After the demolition, he moved his young family into a one-bedroom apartment at the lower storey of the same building where they used to live. Daoud's family now lives crowded together in a five square metres room. "I could rent elsewhere but I don't want to leave my city" (Al Jazeera, 2014).

FIGURE 4.6
 Demolition order
 Source: Al Jazeera
 (2014)



Despite Israeli efforts to eradicate Palestinians from East Jerusalem, Daoud consciously decided to remain, enduring through precarious circumstances, and struggling to achieve his 'right to the city'. "If we leave the city, Jerusalem will be empty. [...] I don't have another home. That's what the Israelis want. They want us to leave Jerusalem" (Al Jazeera, 2014). The process of 'silent transfer' appears to be well known to Daoud, to which he responds by reclaiming his belonging to the Holy City. Simultaneously, by stating that Jerusalem would be empty without Palestinians, he seems to suggest that the city would almost cease to exist whenever the Zionist vision would be fully accomplished. Such a hyperbolic narrative of 'Othering' is used to counter Israeli racist policies, by retrieving his agency within power dynamics (Yacobi, 2004). The sense of belonging is framed through a sort of responsibility towards his city, as if the act of being there—of being present—and giving a meaning to places was part of the wider political project of enduring Palestine.

The sense of belonging is framed through a sort of responsibility towards his city, as if the act of being there—of being present—and giving a meaning to places was part of the wider political project of enduring Palestine.

4.2 Palestinian families as a care infrastructure

Palestinian families, for either pragmatic or emotive reasons, build regardless of the risk of demolition, and even after, some decide to remain. Meanwhile, they give and build a meaning to space through the everyday gesture of enduring the precarious reality of the Occupation. What the documentary does not show though, is that this practice is not relegated to the space of the single-family house. In fact, as shown in Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's ethnographic work "the most pervasive result of continued oppressions and occupation has been to preserve the bonds of social solidarity and family" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005: 120). East Jerusalem's urban landscape is shaped by a network of family interconnectedness, functioning as an infrastructure of care able to endure precarious realities and contain subversive potential. Yet, this socio-spatial organisation of the territory was already in place before the Occupation. It did not emerge as a response to it but was rather strengthened by it.

To understand its functioning, it is crucial to rely on Harker's (2012, 2016) ethnographic investigation on the structural organization of Palestinian families and production of space. Arabic language distinguishes between the *a'ila*, meaning the nuclear family, and the *hamala*, referring to the extended family, including the totality of relatives that usually live close together (Harker, 2016). Traditionally, the *hamala* evolves when a newly married couple makes their own home close to the husband's parental one, ensuring the inherited ownership of the land and maintaining physical proximity to the kin-network of support (Margolit, 2007). Families are thus responsible for shaping Palestinian spatial grammar, forming an indentarian geography based on relationships of "proximity, reciprocity and continuity" (Amrov, 2017). The notion of 'home' encompasses a heterogeneous plurality of human and non-human bodies, responsible for the production of a dwelling space where the private and public dimensions overlap in the process of place-making, forming an infrastructure of care strongly connected to feelings of belonging to the homeland. The emblematic example is given by the use of the word *beit*—which in Palestinian Arabic stands for 'home'—as a toponym, by adding the name of the family that resides in a certain building (Amrov, 2020).

The notion of ‘home’ encompasses a heterogeneous plurality of human and non-human bodies, responsible for the production of a dwelling space where the private and public dimensions overlap in the process of place-making, forming an infrastructure of care strongly connected to feelings of belonging to the homeland.

Thus, the everyday lexicon moves past the materiality of bricks and cement, unravelling the ontological relationships existing between Palestinian identity and production of space.

In relation to the lack of a formal Palestinian political representative body, the infrastructures of family “have been the central source of Palestinian survival and national identity...” performing as “a key protector and form of social authority” (Harker, 2016: 10). Hence, “despite the highly developed national consciousness and defined sense of national identity” (Kanaaneh, 2002: 56), Palestinian nationalism finds its expression at the margins, in the safe space of the home. For the pervasive nature of ‘creeping apartheid’, this heterogenous infrastructure of care has been inevitably involved by the conflict in its evolution, because essentially, as suggested by Amrov (2020), “the Israeli state’s targeting Palestinian homes recognises the fundamental affective role they play in sustaining life, and by extension, sustaining revolt”. Yet, Palestinian existence is not a mere extension of the revolt. But rather, when facing a demolition order, families respond to the rule of hegemony to protect their family and secure their community. Care, as the pivotal concept holding together this infrastructure, activates counter discourses and practises that aim to preserve that very sense of home that is being jeopardised by the ethnocratic exercise of power. In the midst of destruction and trauma, care in its infrastructural configuration fuels and amplifies the subversive potential of spatial protests. The meaning of place, the feeling of belonging, the production of individual and collective identity, and the essential steadfastness required to endure through precariousness and uncertainty, sink their roots in a fertile and self-healing ground, generously fed by the inevitable notion of care.

4.3 Tracing the roots of informality

Like Sahar, Azzam and Daoud, many Palestinians in East Jerusalem decide to face the consequences of building in violation of Israeli law, because they fundamentally need shelter, and because, from a paradigmatic perspective, to leave the city implies the risk of losing the permanent residency status. Yet, they do not only build houses, but lives within homes that reach other lives and homes across the infrastructure of families existing through and beyond the Occupation. As Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian reports (2005: 120), women who lost “their home, often spoke of [it] as a vessel of unity, love, care, and hope, expressed through the rituals of cooking, meeting together, and maintaining social ties”, which reminds of Sahar’s family, gathering around an improvised table and having the first Ramadan dinner after the house demolition.

Through these individual decisions to remain and radically endure everyday reality in the face of spatial policies of discrimination, a whole city was informally built, and whereas Israeli discourses portray these neighbourhoods as the “chaotic, and illegal, [...] dark side of the city” (Braverman, 2007: 337), they are actually “an extension of the consolidated city: [...] built with cement and bricks and, often, [...] cannot be distinguished from the formal city at first glance” (Chiodelli, 2019: 138). Regardless of Israeli efforts to push away Palestinians from East Jerusalem, today, the current ratio is equal to 38% Arabs and 62% Jews (Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2020). Therefore, the political dimension of informality appears as a form of “radical housing” (Lancione, 2020), resulting from the contested status of the Holy City (Chiodelli, 2019). Today, around 30-40% of Palestinian housing units in East Jerusalem are considered illegal, and it should be noted that most of the legal houses date prior to 1967, which means that during the last decades, 90% of the new residential Arab units were built illegally (Chiodelli, 2019). Thus, one can affirm that informality “has become one of the most evident features of urban development in the Palestinian part of the city” (Braier & Yacobi, 2017).

If we approach urban informality as the wider scalar product of individual and collective “spatial protests” (Yacobi, 2004), then its roots are to be found in Palestinian processes of place-making. According to Yacobi (2004: 70), the spatio-political tension stemming from the phenomenon of extensive unauthorised residential building, fundamentally ties to “the construction of meaning as well as of a sense of belonging and identity within the Palestinian population”. I agree that the origin of such spatial protests here lies and nests, but I suggest that the inevitable act of care is actually responsible for perpetually providing the fuel to this phenomenon to reproduce and sustain itself. Palestinian families, while performing the “attempt to achieve their ‘right to the city’” (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2002: 677), generate social networks of mutual care to provide creative alternatives to the daily obstacles imposed by Israeli control and surveillance. Care, for its capacity to fluidly circulate among human and nonhuman bodies, interlaces connections that eventually flourish into feelings of belonging, shaping national and personal identity. In this sense, spatial protests within East Jerusalem’s form of radical housing highly resonate with the notion of “radical care” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020), as the inevitable response to the social injustice produced by the geopolitical context.

The meaning of place, the feeling of belonging, the production of individual and collective identity, and the essential steadfastness required to endure through precariousness and uncertainty, sink their roots in a fertile and self-healing ground, generously fed by the inevitable notion of care.

Resistance coincides with the rupture of a form of inhabitation and the consequential instinct to protect those that are close to us, both physically and emotionally—those human and nonhuman subjects that we care for and about. [...] In this sense, Palestinian resistance is going to continue being an immanent possibility within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as long as the logics of care will be reproduced by Palestinian people.

05. Conclusions: spaces for hope

In this paper I aimed to open new dimensions on the notion of Palestinian resistance that finds continuity in the inevitable gesture of care. Resistance coincides with the rupture of a form of inhabitation and the consequential instinct to protect those that are close to us, both physically and emotionally—those human and nonhuman subjects that we care for and about. When we care about something, either a material object or an idea, we will either consciously and unconsciously strive in order to maintain it. In this sense, Palestinian resistance is going to continue being an immanent possibility within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as long as the logics of care will be reproduced by Palestinian people.

The forces that are at place within the space of the home are both influenced by fields of power produced 'in the outside' and influence the way societies are reproduced 'by the inside'. Which unravels the fact that the straight separation between private and public is an illusion because there are dynamics at play within societies that smoothly circulate beyond and through the materiality of bodies, regardless of the boundaries imposed by sterile classifications; and care is one of them. Political transformation needs the space of the home just as much as it needs the public space of the outside. Care in this sense also provides a way of thinking for a determinative political project in places that are usually overlooked. If we think about the home as a heterogenous and dynamic place where transformative potential is provided by care, the private space can be the catalyst for an alternative way of doing politics.

The stories of Sahar, Azzam and Daoud provide a dramatically lucid perspective on the reality of the Occupied Territories of East Jerusalem, demonstrating that not even the safe space of the home is a secure place for Palestinians. People would build for pragmatic and emotive reasons, consciously facing the risk of demolition, endure through everyday precarious circumstances, and resist the rule of the Occupation while shaping East Jerusalem's spatial grammar. Yet, can we still name resistance when in fact it led to a painful defeat? I am formulating this question not to offer a fixed answer or to provide a rubric on resistance, but rather to open new horizons on the reality of the Occupation and the political dimension of the home. The brutality inflicted to the material body of the house

If we think about the home as a heterogenous and dynamic place where transformative potential is provided by care, the private space can be the catalyst for an alternative way of doing politics.

reverberates through the body of individuals, families, and the Palestinian population at large. It is a painful, tragic, and traumatic experience that marks people's lives indefinitely. It is also a 'legalised crime', and the struggle of Palestinian people lays exactly in knowing that the Israeli state will not stop shamelessly attacking the most intimate aspects of everyday life, until the Zionist project is accomplished. Thus, how do we trace the line between resistance and hopelessness? This question, again, leads to infinite answers and none. But I would like to rely one last time on the voices of Palestinians for imagining some space for hope, and borrow the words of Halimeh, a woman interviewed by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005: 138):

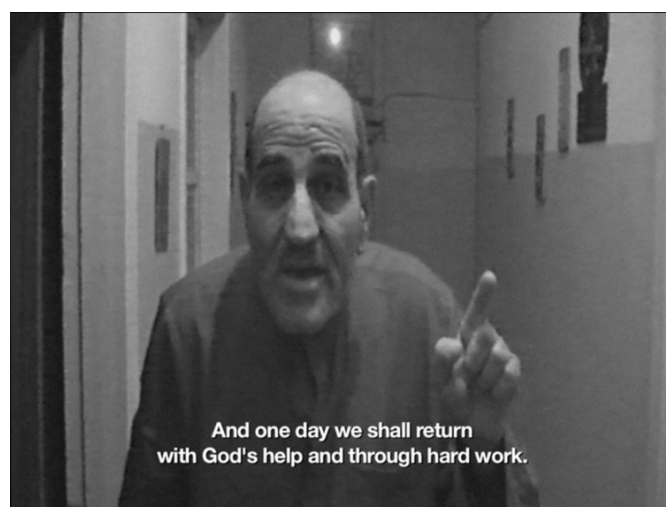
"I am not an educated woman like you [she was talking to me], but I know one thing—if we keep on having hope that one day we will have a wattan [homeland], if we keep supporting and being an izweh [social connection and support] for each other, and if we rebuild everything they destroy, and love each other (and I am afraid we have started losing it lately), they will keep fearing us. See, our support and love for each other is very dangerous."

FIGURE 5.1 (left)

Jeddo/Grandpa I
Source: Mahdi Fleifel
(2012)

FIGURE 5.2 (right)

Jeddo/Grandpa II
Source: Mahdi Fleifel
(2012)



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