

ographer. To be sure the author has cited all the relevant works by geographers, and especially Israeli geographers. But I cannot help wonder if the geographic literature is in place why it was not exploited by a geographer. One caveat as you read the book: take careful notes since the index contains only the names of individuals.

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PALESTINE – THE EMERGENCE OF A FENCED STATE by Elisha Efrat. Tel Aviv: Mednik Zvika Books, 2008.

Only four decades after Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the extensive colonization of Palestinian space, we are witnessing a significant growth of Israeli writing that focuses on this subject as a defined category of study and critical analysis. Most of the scholars—from disciplines such as political science (Gordon, 2008), political philosophy (Azoulay and Ophir, 2008), planning and architecture (Weizman, 2007) and sociology (Grinberg, 2007)—contribute immensely to this emerging body of knowledge by aiming to analyze, concretize and conceptualize the Israeli model of colonization in the Palestinian territories. However, this important epistemological trend is largely unwelcome within Israeli academia, and one can hardly find courses or seminars that explicitly deal with Israeli Occupation Studies.

Against the above background, the book under review, Efrat's *Palestine – The Emergence of a Fenced State*, is an essential contribution to this new field. The contribution, I would suggest, does not stem solely from the data or the analysis that Efrat presents in this book, though this too is valuable. Rather, the book as a whole should be read as a sociological document that maps focal changes in the study of Israeli geography. These changes are embodied and expressed in the biography of the book's author, Professor Elisha Efrat, who is one of the senior geographers in Israel and a 2007 laureate of the Israeli Prize in Geography. Efrat's well-known traditional text books accompany every Israeli student of geography; his previous texts on Israeli geography are characterized by a descriptive approach that has overlooked the contested nature and often oppressive results of Israeli geographies and space construction. However, this Efrat's recent book marks a shift in his analysis towards Israeli colonial geography, as he notes in the introduction:

It seems that in the early days, the occupation of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip was full of good intentions and intended to be enlightened and possibly even temporary. However, history of the human race has no examples of an occupation of this type.... When all of the world's colonial states had left their colonies, Israel decided to renew the days of colonialism, as of old. Practically

speaking, Israel has not conquered its desires but rather conquered territory (p. 12).

Furthermore, Efrat takes his argument towards the ethical sphere by demonstrating that the making of Israeli colonial geographies is not just as a theoretical discipline, but also as a geopolitical reality created by professional mechanisms:

[T]he occupation is not the sole property of the government, the army and security establishment. In essence, everything is contaminated by the occupation: institutions of justice and law, doctors who are silent when medical treatment is denied to the population in the territories, the teachers who do not protest the closure of educational institutions...journalists who do not report, authors and artists who hold their tongue, architects and engineers who lend a hand to initiations of the occupation – settlements, roadblocks, the separation fence and bypass roads. (p.13)

Statements such as those above are articulated throughout the book, which presents a detailed background and analysis of the major historical events of the past hundred years, and describes their influence in determining the current territorial and border configurations of the two peoples as well as their contested claims to sovereignty and statehood. The nine chapters of the book discuss the different phases of the dispute over land and borders that lies at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; as in other cases of nation building, this dispute has political and social dimensions, and embodies questions concerning identity, class formation and the symbolic production of space.

A major part of the discussion in this book is devoted to the meaning and effects of the Separation Fence between Israel and the Palestinian territory intended as a barrier against further terror attacks within the Green Line. Yet, as Efrat points out in Chapter Four, though the line of the fence runs along the course of the Green Line, which has separated Israel from the West Bank since 1948, it also deviates from this line in a number of places. In an attempt to keep as many Israeli settlements as possible inside Israel, the separation fence has been pushed to the east, annexing land which does not belong to Israel, under the assumption that this line will eventually become a *de facto* political boundary in a future peace agreement—a scenario which is totally rejected by the Palestinians. Indeed, following Efrat, the construction of the wall created a new geopolitical reality while practically affecting every aspect of Palestinian life: it abuses individual and collective rights and creates facts on the ground whose aim is to block the Palestinian national state-building project.

But beyond the analysis of the problematic nature of this unilateral act by Israel, Efrat's discussion neglects an important dimension of the debate concerning the construction of the wall; i.e. its objective to tangibly produce a *separation* between Israel and the territories. As noted by Yacobi and Newman (2008), the notion of

separation was pushed into Israeli public discourse with support from academics as well as different organizations who tried to depoliticize this action using the discourse of securitization, such as the "Gader LaHaim" (A Fence for Life), neutralizing identity dimensions and transforming it into a technical matter. The securitization discourse provided the means for self-justification for many Israelis while effectively strengthening their identity claims to additional territories.

Finally, in the last chapter, "The future of fenced Palestine", Efrat aims to draw some practical conclusions about the future possibilities of "fenced Palestine" and, as he axiomatically notes, "it can be assumed that the sovereign territory of Palestine will not be much bigger than its current holding in its two separate parts" (p. 243). Within this framework, which accepts Israeli domination in the future, he advocates the physical-spatial development of the future Palestinian fenced state as the only platform for change. For this reader, such a naïve conclusion is disappointing; the Palestinian territory is not only fenced. As Efrat himself points out throughout this book, the geopolitical conditions and power relations are the basis for understanding the spatial fragmentation of Palestine and thus it cannot be considered a "territory" but rather fragmented islands of Palestinian villages and towns, brutally divided by Israeli occupation as a system of roads and checkpoints. Indeed, in my view, despite Efrat's detailed and rich geographical analysis, the last chapter falls into the trap that many other Israelis have also fallen into; i.e. the belief that Palestinian current conditions could be improved if the Palestinian state "will be able to direct its resources to the important development issues that could improve the life of its residents" (p. 249).

References

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