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Mandy Turner and Omar Shweiki, eds., *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy: De-development and Beyond*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 288 pp., \$100.00 US (hbk), ISBN 9781137448743.

*Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy* is a timely and important contribution to at least three fields of academic study: political economy, Palestine/Israel studies, as well as colonialism and decoloniality. Admittedly, my own work and areas of expertise do not reside in the field of political economy, and I am by no means in a position to review the book's contribution to this area. However, this in itself could provide an interesting perspective on the book. There is often in academia a false dichotomy created between analyses of political-economy and work that is more theoretically inclined and discursively focused. While my work falls in the latter camp, I have always greatly valued critical political-economy studies, which I do not view as necessarily economically-reductionist as I likewise reject the claim that theoretical/discursive analyses are a-material.

Generally speaking, *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy* seeks to unpack what Sara Roy calls the "de-development" of the Palestinian economy as a whole. De-development refers to a set of Israeli government policies that deliberately work to halt, stunt, and largely prevent economic development in the Palestinian territories. In her foreword to the book, Roy outlines two main reasons for the establishment and implementation of these policies: (a) the Israeli government wants to prevent the emergence of a competing Palestinian economy, and (b) more crucially, they want to "preclude the establishment, in any form, of a Palestinian state" (ix). Roy's analysis of de-development is centered on the political economy of Gaza, and therefore the book sets out to apply the concept of de-development to the rest of the Palestinian body politic. The editors, Mandy Turner and Omar Shewiki, argue that the field of political economy has so far focused only on the fragmented experiences of the different "sections of the Palestinian people" (2, original emphasis). By sections, they are referring to the geographical dispersal of Palestinian communities into separate areas such as Gaza, the West Bank, Palestinian communities inside Israel, East Jerusalem, refugee camps, and the Bedouins. Instead of reifying these sections and their differences, instead of following the colonial grammar that actively creates/sustains these so-called sections, the book examines the ways in which de-development operates across all of the communities of the Palestinian people, and how de-development furthers their separation by preventing the emergence of a stable and growing Palestinian political-economy that could serve as the foundation of a contiguous Palestinian state.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, “De-development Explored,” applies the concept of de-development to key areas of the Palestinian economy, focusing on macro-scale Israeli economic and political policies as well as internationally backed economic agreements (Sahar Taghdisi-Rad in Chapter 1), the role of international donors (Mandy Turner in Chapter 2), the politics of water distribution (Clemens Messerschmid in Chapter 3), and spatial restrictions and house demolitions (Nadera Shalhoub-Kerkovian and Rachel Busbridge in Chapter 4). The second part, “De-development Applied,” examines the ways in which de-development is experienced by Palestinians, bringing to attention the exclusion of Palestinian refugees from economic development (Ingrid Jaradat Gassner in Chapter 5), practices of dispossession and disenfranchisement of Palestinian Arabs inside Israel (Mtanes Shehadeh and Raja Khalidi in Chapter 6), Israeli confiscation of Palestinian resources and eradication of Palestinian Bedouin-Arab ways of life (Ismael Abu-Saad in Chapter 7), and urban structuring plans in East Jerusalem (Rami Nasrallah in Chapter 8). Part three, “De-development Resisted,” analyzes four different strategies/paths of resistance to colonization, occupation and de-development, illuminating the failures and limitations of the Palestinian Authority’s (PA) 2009 neoliberal state-building program (Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour in Chapter 9), the enormous impact and role of the tunnel economy in reviving and sustaining the Gaza economy (Nicolas Pelham in Chapter 10), what we can learn from a concept and practice that predominated the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from 1965 until 1982 called *‘amal ijtima’i* (social work or duties)—that is, the social struggle required for the collective socio-economic advancement of Palestinian communities (Omar Shweiki in Chapter 11), and an alternative development agenda based on the UN concept of “larger freedom” (Mushtaq H. Khan in Chapter 12).

In addition to the well-documented investigations of macroeconomic structures and government policies, I was particularly impressed by the ways in which micro-scale experiences were brought into the discussion to illuminate the policies’ impact on everyday lives of Palestinians. For example, Ismael Abu-Saad’s chapter, “State-Directed ‘Development’ as a Tool for Dispossession of the Indigenous Palestinian Bedouin-Arabs in the Naqab,” combines a macro analysis of Israeli government land-confiscation and education policies with statements from young Bedouin men and women who experience these policies in their daily lives. When the reader is confronted with a nine-year old boy’s simple statement about the difficulty of travelling to and from school and the testimony of a young woman explaining how long travel times inhibit the ability of girls to gain higher education (due to patriarchal values and structures that prohibit girls from travelling long distances alone), then the reader feels the urgent need for tackling these problems and addressing these policies. This is crucial for any work that seeks to bring to the attention of English readers in North America and Western Europe the plight of the Palestinian people.

The book also reveals the great extent to which political-economy analyses speak to the same themes and problems highlighted in theoretical and discursive analyses of the Palestinian struggle. For instance, Ingrid Jaradat Gassner’s chapter, “Palestinian Refugees: From ‘Spoilers’ to Agents of Development,” shows the importance of connecting any development strategy with the task of improving and transforming the social and political conditions/positions of Palestinian refugees. In addition to economic development questions, Jaradat Gassner argues, scholars, activists, and policy-makers must simultaneously address the ways in which refugees have been ousted from the Palestinian question in mainstream political discourse. Without this simultaneous approach, refugees will continue to face exile and banishment from their homeland. Another example comes from Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour’s chapter, “Neoliberalism and the Contradictions of the

Palestinian Authority's State-building Programme," which outlines the corruption of the Palestinian Authority and how this corruption is fed by—at the same time that it feeds—the advancement of a neoliberal economics in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). This adds an important economic dimension to scholarly understanding of the history of the PLO in its long and unfortunate transformation from a progressive decolonial movement for national liberation to a corrupt institution that aids the Israeli settler-colonial project (a transformation that is also usefully analyzed in Chapter 11 by Omar Shweiki and Chapter 12 by Mushtaq Khan).

This leads into the question of decoloniality. Despite the failures and shortcomings of decolonial struggles and movements across the globe and not just in Palestine, it remains the best guide and hope for all of those who have lived and continue to live the horrors of colonialism and settler-colonialism. In their efforts to contribute to a decolonial struggle, I applaud the book's authors and editors. The last section of the book is dedicated to the resistance against de-development and the advancement of a decolonial political-economy. Chapter 9 by Khalidi and Samour reveals the limits of a neoliberal program, and Chapter 11 by Shweiki and Chapter 12 by Khan offer fruitful concepts (*'amal ijtima'i* and larger freedom, respectively) for thinking decolonial political-economy. As far as I can see though, we are only really given two concrete examples of this resistance in the entire book (one of which was from the first section of the book). The first example, by Shalhoub-Kerkovian and Busbridge in Chapter 4, is an excellent account of how Palestinian women use micro-techniques and strategies, such as using the ID of another woman to pass Israeli checkpoints or working part-time in a soon-to-be demolished home, in their resistance to macro Israeli strategies of de-development. The second example, by Nicolas Pelham in Chapter 9, is a fantastic examination of the tunnel economy and its staggering role in the redevelopment of Gaza, where "by the end of May 2010, traders reported that the tunnels accounted for 68 per cent of all goods available in Gaza's markets" (203), giving rise to a new class of middlemen, traders, and merchants in the process. So here we have a micro-resistance of women in East Jerusalem and a macro-resistance of tunnel diggers and merchants in Gaza.

I think, in fact, that these two examples can potentially contribute to a decolonial political-economy framework, combined with the concepts of *'amal ijtima'i* and larger freedom. I therefore want to ask the editors and the authors: in what ways can we think of a decolonial political-economy framework that would be based on the interconnections between concrete micro and macro practices of resistance? Granted, this question is not the book's mission or aim, and thus I do not wish to frame it as a direct criticism or shortcoming of the book, but I want to ask it in the spirit of a constructive engagement with what the book itself engenders. For example, I'm left wondering how a tunnel economy type of solution might apply in East Jerusalem? Are neo-liberal economics more entrenched in Palestinian Israeli communities than they are in the occupied Palestinian territories and therefore more difficult to oppose there? Are micro-level acts of resistance even moderately effective on their own in a refugee camp in Lebanon the way they might be in Ramallah? Are there cases and/or opportunities for joint Palestinian-Israeli economic development on the community level, that work to oppose the de-development model of the Israeli state? These and other questions would be interesting for the book's editors and authors to perhaps address in a future collaboration.

This brings me to my last point, where perhaps there is a point of contention, particularly with the aforementioned editors' holistic approach to the Palestinian body politic. I completely agree with the necessity of opposing the colonial fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic, but this I believe can be accomplished without also losing sight of

the fragmented state of the Palestinian people. Fragmentation does not have to necessarily follow the colonial grammar (as suggested on pp. 2-3, 8), and there is a decolonial language that can speak of fragmentation without necessarily falling into the colonial logic of divide and conquer. I would argue that there are literary efforts that achieve such a balance between the whole and the parts. Serious literary representations of the Palestinian self and the Palestinian struggle, like the works of Mahmoud Darwish or Elias Khoury, grapple with the difficult task of understanding the whole of “Palestinianess,” if I may use such a term, at the same time that they do not lose sight of the fact that Palestinians are also fragmented—that the Palestinian self is, fundamentally by virtue of its displacement, a fragmented self. In such works, the whole and the parts are never forced into a harmonious shape, reflecting the fact that the lived experiences of Palestinians are far from harmonious. In these literary representations, it is important to add, the multiplicity of what it means to be Palestinian is understood in terms that do not succumb to the colonial manner of fragmenting the Palestinian self. Indeed, their works offer a decolonial notion of the self where the emancipation of the self is understood beyond nationalist terms, which have betrayed the Palestinian struggle for freedom thus far.

Likewise, in the exilic imagination of Edward Said, we find an attempt to think the multiplicity of Palestinian identities, as irreducible to any mono-identity, while simultaneously situating this multiplicity within a shared condition of Palestinian exile and dispossession. It is certainly difficult to imagine, think, write, and act in this exilic manner, but it remains, I think, the most fruitful path forward and it is, I would argue, the very defining feature of decoloniality—a feature which separates the decolonial world from the colonial world. Therefore, I want to ask: how can a decolonial political-economy operate on the whole Palestinian political-economy at the same time that it pays close attention to the fragmented conditions in which Palestinian communities live, the different material obstacles they face, and the different concrete solutions they practice?

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