The West Bank-Israel Economic Integration: Palestinian Interaction with the Israeli Border and Permit regimes

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Introduction

Numerous scholars have extensively evaluated the far-reaching impact of Israeli colonial rule on the Palestinian economy. In general, two overlapping features characterized the Palestinian-Israeli economic relations: domination and integration. The domination signals the asymmetrical power relations and the subordinate status of the Palestinian economy within the colonial hierarchy. Whereas integration refers to the diverse and ramified economic relations that actually take place between Palestinian and Israeli actors— some are less acknowledged than others. It is fair to claim that scholars were preoccupied more by the implication of Israeli domination. Repeatedly, they attempted to show how the Israeli colonial structure caused de-development (Roy 1999), undermined the possibility of independence (Khalidi 2017) and reproduced dependency (Abed 1988). They concluded that the more Israel intensifies its colonial domination, the more the Palestinian economy is fragmented, pauperized and distorted (Seidel and Tarir 2019; Khalidi 2016; Farsakh 2005b).

This chapter argues that this conclusion reflects only part of the broader picture. The modes of integration that underlie the Israeli colonial domination have not yet been fully explored. For instance, the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration had always encompassed many economic activities that include not only formal trade and wage-labor, but also subcontracting (Samara 2000), smuggling (Misyef 2018b), intermediation (Lagerquist 2003), laundering settlement goods (Dana and Shihadeh 2012), and Palestinian capitalists' direct investments in Israel and the Israeli settlements (Smeirat 2011). In addition, the Palestinian participants in these activities are not necessarily powerless and exploited. In some relationships, they are acting as profit-seekers or collaborative partners (Dana 2020). To demonstrate the complexity of the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration, the chapter challenge the mainstream hidden premise that placed the Israeli colonial structure in the fore as the main determinant of the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration. Not intending to underestimate the colonial top-down impositions as the

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overarching shaping factors, the chapter is interested in the Palestinian-Israeli economic encounters in daily life. It attempts to highlight how Palestinian class actors, operating in different economic sectors, can innovate strategies of "adaptation", and convert the complexity of the structure into ingredients to improve their life chances (Lustick 2011). As elaborated below, Palestinian economic actors are aware of the contradictions and vulnerabilities of the colonial system, and the possibilities to engage in economic activities that go beyond the range of colonial determinations.

Although Palestinian-Israeli economic relations have been extensively analysed on the aggregated level, essential components of economic integration, that are more observable on the disaggregated level, have gone under-researched for two reasons. *First*, scholars limited their investigations to the apparent and measureable Palestinian-Israeli economic relationships; most importantly "formal" trade (Samour 2016) and labor migration (Farsakh 2005b). In fact, actual economic integration entails diversified rapports that combine both registered and measurable as well as clandestine and unmeasurable relations, such as smuggling, tax evasion and fraud activities (Misyef 2018b). Understanding *why* smuggling flourished in the Palestinian economy, and increasingly gave rise to additional number of involved actors can unveil more hidden aspects of economic integration. In another example, Palestinian labor and Israeli employers are being mediated by different modes of brokerage relations (Niezna 2018). Opening the "black box" of brokerage can reveal extremely different levels of labor exploitation, and explain *how* exactly Palestinian-Israeli economic integration is operating under colonial domination.

The *second* observed deficiency concerns the weak engagement in the dialectical relation between the dynamic colonial domination and the modes of economic integration. For instance, when Israel institutionalized its closure system after the Second Intifada, different Palestinian economic actors emerged while others were badly affected, as will be shown soon. This mission requires more theoretical and analytical engagement in the political economy underpinning the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration. This chapter aspires to advance the understanding of the political economy of the integration by illustrating the usefulness of two analytical approaches. Each one points to a key mechanism underpinning the daily economic encounters between the West Bank and Israel. First, by drawing insight into the *political economy of*

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borderlands, the chapter focuses on widespread, yet largely overlooked, Palestinian-Israeli economic rapports: smuggling. Once Israel bounded out the West Bank by different types of borders, new Palestinian economic actors spontaneously following their self-interest acted to accelerate Palestinian-Israeli economic integration by illicit means. Second, the *sociology of brokerage* is called upon to make sense of the role of permit brokers, wide-ranging Palestinian segments that include officials in the Palestinian District Coordination Offices (DCOs), Ministry of Civil Affairs, chambers of commerce, Jerusalemite construction contractors, manpower suppliers and intermediary offices. These Palestinian actors profit from facilitating highly restricted yet "legal" economic activities with Israel.

The examples presented are driven from the post-2005 period to show how Palestinian-Israeli economic integration accelerated in response to the intensification of colonial domination over the Palestinian life. In order to preserve a coherent analysis, I will narrow the discussion to the West Bank-Israeli economic integration since the Second Intifada in 2000. In contrast to the ghettoized Gaza Strip (Khalidi 2017), the West Bank is subject to a colonial structure that functions as a "demographic ruling apparatus" to exclude the Palestinian population from the Israeli polity (Azoulay and Ophir 2013), while simultaneously achieving creep annexation of the West Bank territories (Lustick 2018). To maintain a balance between population exclusion and territorial inclusion (settler colonial model), Israel employed diverse policies to discipline the Palestinians and confine their residency to specific enclaves (Handel 2010). However, various Palestinian local actors "made use" of these complex colonial conditions to engage into profit-seeking activities.

West Bank-Israel trade as a borderland economy

Since the early 1970s, West Bank-Israeli trade relations have been a central component of Palestinian-Israeli economic integration. As Israeli colonial regulations converted the West Bank into a captive market for the Israeli goods, Israel became the main and indisputable destination for both West Bank imports and exports (Hever 2010; Arnon 2007). Although this equation remained immune to any radical change, it should be emphasized that the West Bank-Israeli trade exchange operated within a dynamic colonial system that continually requires reinvestigation. Therefore, I suggest treating the West Bank as a "borderland economy" by paying

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attention to the role of two types of borders: First, the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations as an intangible administrative border that converted the imposed bilateral trade exchange into commercial crossing between two different administrative entities bounded together by a customs union agreement (Elmusa and El-Jaafari 1995). Second, the Israeli space-control system imposed in the aftermath of the Second Intifada, which operated as a multi-layer physical border and converted the Palestinian localities into sealed and isolated enclaves (Handel 2009). The implication of these borders on the West Bank-Israeli economic integration have yet not been fully explored. The reason is that contemporary literature on the political economy of the West Bank conceived them from a standpoint of state institutions (Paris Protocol) or colonial impositions (space-control system) that regulated the trade activities of local actors. It neglected the way those actors creatively responded to borders that once constructed, emerged as institutions around which state-society interactions occur (Feyissa, Hoehne, and Höhne 2010).

Borderland analytical tools can change our understanding about the way borders affect the West Bank-Israel trade relations. Instead of assuming borders as only stifling lines, borderland studies suggests that borders are also "corridors" that promote new and unanticipated modes of interaction (Newman 2003; Wolputte 2013). For instance, Feyissa et al. (2010) argued that state-imposed borders in the Horn of Africa were disempowering colonial institutions across certain actors, as well as empowering "resources" across others. Hence, borderland scholars (Chan and Womack 2016) started to explore the rise of new economic actors around the borders, and the way they learn how to exploit the different development modes and terms of governance on both sides of the border (see table 1).

The present chapter draws examples from the West Bank-Israeli smuggled trade. Smuggling is defined in the broader sense as all cross-border trade that does not conform to existing state regulations (Paris Protocol) or goes beyond the range of colonial restrictions imposed by Israel (Israel space-control system). Smuggling stipulated by the construction of borders is not unique to the West Bank-Israel case, and is estimated to stand at high levels especially in colonial contexts (Meagher 2010). Neglecting the economic actors involved in smuggling, and their trans-border social networks will lead to incomplete and distorted understanding of the political economy underpinning the trade relations (Malik and Gallien 2019).

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It is worth noting that the available literature on the West Bank-Israeli trade base their analysis on the measurable, and thus "formal", trade transactions (Samour 2016; Arnon 2007). Although some of these studies realized the existence of smuggling, none of them sought to transcend the division between "formal" and "informal" trade, and to normalize —at least analytically— the smuggling in order to explore the actual extent of the integration. Two reasons stand behind this omission. First, studies built their analysis only on official statistics pertaining to the measured trade transactions to reflect the increasing dependency on Israeli markets. This was, and will continue to be, a methodological question that requires specific tools to collect data on what is considered a "shadow economy". Second, smuggle is treated worldwide as "aberration or departure from the norm" (Malik and Gallien 2019), and a violation of the law that demands a remedy. Therefore, when scholars and reports paid attention to the existence of tax evasion activities in the West Bank, they presented it superficially only to measure its effects on state building, or fiscal leakage (Samour 2016; UNCTAD 2019). It appeared as an additional proof of the dysfunction of the borders under colonial rule. Against this widespread understanding, borderland literature does not distinguish between border-crossing trade according to a "formal" and "informal" division determined by border-makers. Instead, it provides a vantage point to look "from below" to account for the ambivalences, paradoxes and contradictions that characterize life of locals who are experiencing the borders (Wolputte 2013). This work was started by Parizot (2012; 2009) who creatively employed borderland literature to highlight how Palestinian and Israeli local actors took advantage of the faults of the segregation system by creating profit-seeking networks. In their edited volume Latte Abdallah and Parizot (2015) highlighted the existence of diverse economic activities operating in the shadow of the segregation system. Yet, their work focused on revealing smuggling and circumventions rather than explaining the underpinning political economy, as this chapter attempts to do.

However, while some contended that trade exchange is badly affected once borders are harder to cross (UNCTAD 2014; Rabinowitz 2012), smuggling operates differently. Building on borderland literature, I argue that the more border-crossing trade is charged with taxes and customs liabilities (Paris Protocol), the more smuggling activities flourish as a lucrative profession. Moreover, as long as West Bank exports are subject to the Israeli high restrictions on

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logistical routes (Israeli space-control system), more Palestinian-Israeli networks are established to innovate alternative circumventing routes. In what follows, I attempt to look at two types of borders as a backdrop to the formation of unanticipated modes of cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli economic actors: The Paris Protocol and the Israeli space-control system. Each type of border functions differently in terms of regulating the West Bank-Israeli bilateral trade transactions, but also deepening the economic integration by giving rise to additional trans-border profit-seeking actors, as will be explained below.

	Trade exchange		
	formal		informal
Features highlighted by Borderland scholarship	Borders as obstacles	Resourcing on borders	
Israeli border regime	Trade through commercial gates	Palestinian logistical companies, Palestinian truck owners	Profit-seeking smugglers importing from Israel through Area C
			Profit-seeking smugglers exporting to Israeli through settlements
Paris Protocol on Economic Relations	Custom union, Taxation mechanism	Palestinian shipping and clearance companies	Profit-seeking smugglers evading taxes

Table 1: Disaggregation of the West Bank-Israeli trade relationships by highlighting the multiple modes of interaction between Palestinian economic actors and the border structures.

The administrative border: the case of smuggled fuel

The Oslo Accords (1993) and the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations (1994) recognized the Palestinian economy as a distinct entity under the administration of a state-like Palestinian Authority (PA) (Elmusa and El-Jaafari 1995). In terms of the Palestinian-Israeli economic relationships, the Paris Protocol organized, *inter alia*, trade relations and tax clearance according to a custom union model (Iqtait 2019). The "agreement" was highly biased in favor of Israel, and

what appeared as a bilateral agreement was in fact a restructuring of the Israeli colonial regulations that deepened the economic dependence of the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Israel (Roy 1998). Practically, the PER converted commerce between the West Bank and Israel into foreign trade dependent on border-crossing mechanisms. Both the Government of Israel and the PA institutionalized the two-state two-economy trade patterns by regulating the clearance mechanism and the exchange of VAT payments. Although Israel refused the demarcation of any physical border between the Palestinian administrated territories and Israeli spaces (Arnon 2007), still the PER is considered a dividing line between two different economic spheres.

One of the important implications of the PER is that several types of taxes and fees on bilateral trade transactions are cleared on the bases of the final destination (Samour 2016). For instance, West Bank imports from Israel are subject to VAT (16%) which is collected by Israel on behalf of the PA. It is cleared to the Palestinian ministry of Finance only if Palestinian importers declare their transaction and deliver formal invoices. Once the volume of imported goods is declared to the PA, Palestinian merchants are then subject to income tax (another 10-15%) as they distribute the goods inside the West Bank (Misyef 2018b). Avoiding these dual taxes will enable the Palestinian economic merchants to offer their goods at more competitive prices, reduce their comparative costs, and thus increase their profits (UNCTAD 2019). Precisely because Israel resolutely refused the demarcation of physical borders between the West Bank and Israel, smuggling based on tax evasion, turn to be a lucrative profession among wide range of Palestinian locals. What appeared on the macro level as a Palestinian economy in the West Bank (Areas A, B and C), was in fact "noncontiguous enclave economies" mainly in Area A and B (Khalidi 2017). These economic enclaves were scattered and spread as geographically distinct spheres with Israeli full control over and in-between territories (Area C). Because the PA is unable to control the infinite entries and exists that connect Palestinian administrative islands, Palestinian locals built on the complexity of topography to innovate uncountable smuggling routes. Of primary importance is Area C (60% of the West Bank territories), which turned into a huge warehouse for the smuggled goods that can be trafficked gradually and without documentation into Palestinian self-rule territories in Area A and B (UNCTAD 2019; Misyef 2018b). Understanding the PER within the Israeli space-control system not only institutionalized the Palestinian and Israeli economy as

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separate entities but also produced unanticipated Palestinian-Israeli corporative activities that re-bounded both economies through informal practices.

In order to provide a concrete illustration, I draw my example from the fuel market (precisely, gasoline and diesel). The Palestinian petroleum consumption stands on 1 billion liters annually, constituting the largest imported commodity (AMAN 2018). Since the Petroleum products are imported mainly from Israel, its relative high volume and its importance as a vital commodity convert it into a prominent index to reflect on the Palestinian dependency on Israel (Abu Amer 2019). The contract between the PA and the Israeli private fuel suppliers was accused of its contribution in preserving Palestinian-Israeli economic integration and dependency; about 35% of tax revenues collected on bilateral trade with Israel comes from fuel (AMAN 2018). However, reducing the mechanisms of the integration to the PA-Israel private sector contracts as the one and only source is problematic. It is sufficient to note that the proportion of Palestinian formal imports of fuel dropped from 40% out of the total merchandise imports in 2008 to 19% in 2016 (Knoema 2016), while simultaneously the black market started to breed (Misyef 2018b). Neglecting the various mechanisms and myriad local actors involved in fuel smuggling will lead to a simplistic and partial understanding of the Palestinian-Israel economic integration.

Fuel smuggling is a widespread phenomenon in the West Bank, especially in the region of Hebron. So far, reports and scholars have focused solely on its negative impact on Palestinian "development" and state building, and the fiscal leakage it causes from the Palestinian treasury. For instance, Misyef (2018b) estimated that smuggled diesel constitutes 17-25% of total consumed fuel in the West Bank, and the volume of taxes evaded accounts for USD 120 million annually. However, available quantitative estimates are also revealing for present purposes. Since about 69% of the final price of one litre diesel is either Blue tax[1] or VAT imposed by the Paris Protocol agreements(AMAN 2018), smugglers can supply diesel with significantly cheaper prices by avoiding the payment of taxes to the PA (World Bank 2007). Behind the quantitative statistics lays a wide base of Palestinian and Israeli actors, operating clandestinely to improve

[1] Blue tax (or Blu Tax) is a specific type of excise tax imposed only on fuel purchases (Gasoline and Diesel). It is determined by the Israeli on petroleum products sold either in Israel or inside the Palestinian territories, and constitutes of about 50% of the final price (AMAN 2018).

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their life chances and livelihoods. According to the Palestinian Custom Police, about 80% of the smuggled fuel come from Israeli settlements in the West Bank , reflecting the existence of various settler-Israeli-West Banker networks (Misyef 2018b). These networks entail not only Israeli seller and Palestinian smuggler, but also truck drivers, storing facilities, guards and distributers who roam around Palestinian localities in Areas B and C with a single pump fixed on a 4X4 truck (BBC 2019).

In fact, fuel smuggling is only one piece of a bigger puzzle. Between 2015 and 2017, about 40% of the West Bank total imports were smuggled and never registered nor consolidated within the official statistics (UNCTAD 2019). The UNCTAD (2019) revealed that smuggling exists in almost all economic sectors, most importantly animal feeds, construction goods, agriculture, clothes and machinery. Other reports estimated that smuggling or tax evasion attempts that have already been captured represents only the tip of an iceberg, and that more than 30% of Palestinian merchants rely on smuggled goods (PSC 2014). Furthermore, bidirectional smuggling based on tax evasion entails various lucrative activities: i.e. issuing and selling falsified or counterfeit documents, unregistered Palestinian warehouses in Israeli settlements, bribes to official personnel, networks and alternative logistical routes. Hence, the purpose of calling upon borderland studies is to arrive at a better understanding of the way the colonial system actually operates. Considering the political economy of smuggling and tax evasion is only one way to prove that West Bank-Israeli economic integration is far beyond what has already been discussed in the literature. Moreover, although the Paris Protocol proved to be a “strangling envelope” on the aggregated level of analysis (Grinberg 2015), borderlands literature enables us to observe other contradictory implications. Smugglers are not mere “outlaw” merchants, but real actors who are proliferating the economic integration to extra dimensions.

The Israeli space-control system

Alongside the Paris Protocol administrative border, Israel one-sidedly imposed a physical border to separate the Palestinian spaces in the West Bank from Israel. One of its central components was the erection of eight-meter high wall, which has functioned as an international trade border between the West Bank and Israel, and hampered trans-border Palestinian logistical routes

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(World Bank 2017b). By zooming into the West Bank-Israeli physical border, we can reveal extremely different incentives for smuggling, and therefore other modes of under-researched economic integration. Acknowledging them suggest that Palestinian trade was not always affected by the segregation policies as illustrated in different reports (UNCTAD 2014; World Bank 2017a). In fact, many Palestinian exports reconstructed their exports as "informal" transactions based on alternative circumventing routes. My second example on smuggling focuses on the West Bank exports to Israel and the mechanisms underpinning the trans-border logistical routes. I intend to look closely at the terrestrial pathway to deliver cargo from Palestinian factories in the Palestinian localities to the Israel supplier across the segregation wall. Instead of resembling a state-border, the Israeli physical border entails a complex set of architectures of control: not only the segregation wall, but also settler-only road networks (Salamanca 2016), checkpoints, blocks, fences, closed zones and surveillance hyper-technologies (Peteet 2017). What we refer to as an Israeli space-control system is in fact an ongoing process of classifying the West Bank territories as heterogeneous spaces with different Israeli control regulations and various levels of accessibilities for Palestinian residents.

The effects of the Israeli space-control system on the Palestinian exports have been striking. While previously numerous trade routes connected the Palestinian factories with the Israeli market due to the contiguity of both economies, after the Second Intifada Israel reduced the commercial routes available to Palestinian commercial traffic, by creating bottleneck gates as the only commercial crossing points into Israel. Moreover, Israel imposed a "Back-to-Back" crossing system: freights originating from Palestinian localities were loaded onto Palestinian trucks and then off-loaded onto Israeli trucks after being exposed to strict Israeli security inspection inside the commercial crossing (Garb 2015). This resulted in high logistical costs as cargo was delayed for several hours inside the commercial crossings (World Bank 2017b). The available reports focused on the stifling effects of the "Back-to-Back" system, and contended that the more Israel seals its borders and hampers the fluidity of the logistical routs, the more Palestinian exports to Israel decrease (UNCTAD 2014). However, reducing the wall to a border-like edifice instead of positioning it within the wider Israeli space-control system, conceals other unexpected consequences of the border. Again, by borrowing insight from borderlands literature, I claim that

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the more the segregation wall renders the border-crossing logistics expensive, the more it operates as an incentive to promote Palestinian-Israel local initiatives to circumvent it.

The case of the Nablus furniture industry is an instructive example due to its high reliance on the Israeli market (Misyef 2018a). About 340 manufactures operated in Nablus in 2015, and about 55% of their production was destined to Israel (Misyef 2018a). Instead of complying with the stifling effects of the Israeli space-control system, certain increasing numbers of exporters converted other aspects of the same system into porous "corridors" (A Interview, 2019). It was the Israeli settlements in the West Bank that became a transit station; once accessed, the pathway to Israel will be extremely unleashed. On the one hand, no border crossing can be found between a Palestinian locality and the adjacent Israeli settlement. On the other hand, Israeli settlements in the West Bank are connected to Israel through special unrestricted crossings to facilitate the mobility of the settlers. After 2005, Palestinian furniture exporters started to rent small sheds inside Israeli settlements as a terminal-station to Israel. By focusing only on the volume of exports as the bottom line, researches implemented in slightly different context (Garb 2015) obscured the fact the Palestinian economic activities and the Israeli colonial system are becoming more structurally intertwined. For instance, Palestinian actors who are not part of the furniture sector worked as "freelancers" offering logistical services for Palestinians manufacturers. By demanding relatively high rents, they were able to deliver Palestinian cargo into Israel on time, and undo the hindering effects of the Israeli control on temporality and space (A Interview, 2019). These "informal" activities and positions rests on diverse economic relationships with Israeli counterparts. Further research is required to unveil the ramifications of these relations, and the way the West Bank and Israel are getting more integrated by "unobservable" links.

The sociology of brokerage: permit brokers

In what follows, I focus on Palestinian unskilled labor migrating to Israeli working places (including the Israeli settlements in the West Bank). Scholars had already investigated Palestinian employment in Israel, and its centrality in economic integration despite the changing patterns in its scale over time (Farsakh 2005b; 2003). The emphasis was on the imbalance of power and

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profit between the mobile Palestinian workers and Israeli employers and officials. My purpose is to problematize this economic relationship, and lay the bases to go beyond the available literature in two interrelated dimensions. First, to illustrate the heterogeneity of modes of exploiting Palestinian workers. Second, to reveal the existence of additional Palestinian actors who are structurally linked to the labor-wage market, and whose acknowledgement is necessary to reach to more comprehensive understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration.

When Farsakh (2005a) rightfully described the Palestinian localities as isolated and sealed "Bantustans" serving as labor reserves for the Israeli economy, she paved the way for further research on the process of interconnecting the otherwise unconnected economic actors. The mechanisms of linking between Palestinian workers and Israeli employers rests on a "system of access" that have hardly been investigated from a political economy perspective. By the "system of access", I mean the modes in which the Palestinian labor and the Israeli employer are being connected both in terms of recruitment and crossing the segregated "Bantustans" to reach the working place. After the Second Intifada, the West Bank became subject to a rigid population management system that, between all, rests on two pillars: segregation and permit regime. Segregation is the overarching principle that hamper the Palestinian mobility, and block their access to Israel working places (Peteet 2017). Whereas the permit regime is the other side of the coin, that enables the management of the population by filtering out individuals exempted temporarily from the segregation, and allowed to flow into Israeli places for specific reasons and durations (Berda 2018). Therefore, not only the access of each Palestinian wage-labor to the Israeli market is conditioned by the acquisition of a "working" permit, but also the system of recruiting Palestinian labor for specific working place is considered complicated due to the segregation conditions. Hence, the permit brokers in the West Bank became a central figure in the political economy of labor migration (Niezna 2018).

By borrowing tools from the sociology of brokerage, the chapter seeks to highlight the functional role of permit brokers, as only one prominent example of multiple brokerage activities (see table 2). Seen as a bridge that fills a social chasm between two isolated endpoints (Stovel and Shaw 2012), different scholars became more aware of the structural position of broker in trans-border labor migration (Picherit 2018). Especially when trans-border labor migration is organized

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between two administratively and spatially separated social spheres (Kern and Müller-Böker 2015), yet economically interlinked. As long as the broker has foot in two worlds, his in-between position is more complicated when the two worlds are bounded together through asymmetrical relationships such as colonialism.

Theoretically, asymmetrical relationships can give rise to various structural variations of brokerage according to whether a broker is part of the social structure of the dominating or the subjugated world. For instance, in the pre-Oslo period, West Bank construction labor migration was mainly recruited through Labor Offices managed by the Israeli civil administration (Israeli brokers) in consultation with the Israeli ministry of Labor (Farsakh 2005b, 103). By contrast, in the post-Oslo period new types of recruitment systems appeared, notably the growing reliance on Palestinian brokers and manpower suppliers (Niezna 2018).[2] More than a simple alteration in the modes of recruitment (from Israeli broker to Palestinian broker), it is a structural mutation with far-reaching implications on the political economy of the West Bank labor migration that have not yet been fully explored.

Although the literature on the Palestinian labor touched on the idea of brokers in facilitating the labor migration to Israeli working places (Farsakh 2005b; Busbridge 2017), they never treated them as central to the understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration. Thus, labor migration appeared, more or less, as a relation based on the dichotomous distinction between Palestinian wage-labor and Israeli employer regulated and scaled-up/down by the Israeli colonial policies (Arnon 2007). An exception were some anthropological works such as Vickerey (2017) and Morton-Jerome (2018) who explored various ways the misery of workers under the brokerage system. By contrast, political economy is more interested in the power relations and exploitative hierarchies underpinning the labor-migration. Hence, the sociology of brokerage is suggested to treat the direct actors (Palestinian labor and Israeli employer) as nodes that are not connected by direct lines (Lindquist 2017). Other indispensable indirect nodes, who we call brokers, are structural to what seems like a linear relationship. Their role is based on a patchwork

[2] This should not imply that both modes are mutually exclusive. In each period several types of brokers existed beside the main recruitment system.

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of different practices such as recruiting labor, transporting, facilitating the issuance of working permits, networking and/or smuggling. While official statistics seemingly offer precise information on the scope of West Bank labor migration to Israel - 120,000[3] laborers in the first quarter in 2020 (PCBS 2020), they are actually neglecting an uncertain number of additional actors. Conceiving the Palestinian laborers as organized within configurations according to their brokerage linkages can identify internal hierarchies, between Palestinians as well as between them and Israelis, with varying types and levels of exploitative relationships as they engage with the Israeli labor market.

		The Permit Regime					
		Labour			Business and trade		
Features highlighted by brokerage scholarship	Type	Selling permits	Recruit and deliver the labor without permit	non	Opportunistic middling to launder the settlement products	Selling permits	Middling Hi-Tech cooperation
	example	Registered construction companies	Women brokers in settlements	Either issue a working permit, or self-smuggled into Israel	Palestinian export of Dates to Europe.	Palestinian Civilian Affairs. Palestinian Commerce chambers	Rawabi hi-tech hub.

Table 2: Disaggregating the Palestinian access to Israeli economy by highlighting the brokerage linkage used to sidestep the permit regime.

The Permit brokers

In the first quarter in 2020, the unemployment in the West Bank reached 14%, and the average daily wage was NIS 123 compared with NIS 264 in Israel (PCBS 2020). Hence, the Palestinian un- or semi-skilled workers prefer to migrate on daily bases to Israeli working places, even if this

[3] It is worth noting that out of the total number of West Bank labor migration to Israel, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimated that 72% held working permits, 19% were smuggled and 9% held Jerusalem ID cards or foreign passports (PCBS 2020).

mobility is subject to brokerage rent due to the confinements of the permit regime. It is estimated that there are about 40-50 permit types regulating the access of Palestinians to Israeli places (Al-Qadi 2018). Three permits are relevant to the Palestinian workers: a) a permit to search for work, issued for a one-week duration; b) orange-colored working permit issued for different durations for working inside Israel; c) green-colored working permit issued for different durations for working in West Bank settlements (Al-Qadi 2018). However, the Palestinian worker is unable to issue the second and third types of permits on his own. It is the responsibility of the Israeli employer to present the needed documents and approve his willingness to employ the Palestinian worker in order for the later to be able to issue the working permit (Atkas and Wifaq 2019). This system served as a fertile soil for a growing number of brokers that became an integral part of the labor-employer relation and agents in the "system of access".

To give only one example, part of the Palestinian Jerusalemites registered contractors working in construction are brokers working "illegally" in the permit industry.[4] According to the Israeli Ministry of Labor, each Israeli construction company is permitted to issue certain number of permits to "import" Palestinian low-wage workers, according to the volume of the company's circulated capital- starting by three permits, but it can also be eligible for more than hundred permits (Atkas and Wifaq 2019). According to a report issued by the Bank of Israel (2019, 7), the contractor can pay an average of NIS 1,482 per month to order each working permit. This sum is potentially devoted to cover the worker insurance and taxes according to the Israeli labor law. Because the Jerusalemite contractor does not always need to employ workers in his facilities, he exploits this system and sells permits in the black market.

The system operates as follows: the Jerusalemite contractor employs an additional manpower supplier who has access to world of Palestinian workers in the West Bank, in order to locate potential workers seeking passing-permits. Each Palestinian worker is offered to "buy" a working permit for an average of NIS 1,987 per month. This leaves the broker with a profit on each worker that ranges between NIS 500- 650 per month. This profit is then divided between the owner of

[4] Palestinians Jerusalemites are considered permanent residents in Israel, although the majority of them do not hold citizenship. However, their economic activities (e.g. registering a company) fall under the Israeli law. They also have full access to both the Israeli and Palestinian spaces, and their mobility is not subject to the permit regime.

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the company and his manpower supplier (Atkas and Wifaq 2019). This system enables the Palestinian worker to handle a legal working permit, which is not conditioned by the approval of the final Israeli employee. The worker can roam the Israeli market and move from one working place to another as long as he pays the rent for the Jerusalemite broker on a monthly basis. It is suggested thus to conceive this "system of access" as composite of Palestinian labor-Israeli employee with two in-between nodes: the Palestinian Jerusalemites company owner and the manpower supplier, each extracting part of the labor-wage. The Bank of Israel (2019) estimated that brokerage profits extracted from about 20,000 Palestinian workers who bought permits amounted NIS 122 million in 2018. However, although the hierarchal-exploitation mechanisms are operating "illegally" and under the ground, the direct economic relationships between the Palestinian labor and the Israeli employee is still considered "legal". As long as the Palestinian worker holds a "working permit", potentially he falls under large parts of the Israeli labor laws: insurance, labor rights, social security and wage rates (PIA 2015). It is then according to the final agreement between the two direct actors (worker and employer) that this potentiality is materialized.

The Palestinian workers falling under this specific type of brokerage system should be differentiated from other workers. For the purpose of comparison, Palestinian women as housekeepers in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. They are being "infiltrated" *without* working permits by Palestinian (mainly women) brokers who have good relationships with both the settler community and the Palestinian housekeepers (Bloody Basil 2017). It is the broker herself and not the settler who is considered the employer. The broker is responsible for picking the housekeepers every morning, driving them into the settlements, and monitoring their work. Because housekeeper do not hold a working permit, they receive very low wages compared with "legal" workers, still above the average rate in their Palestinian localities. Furthermore, the broker receives an amount of money from the settlers and distributes it to the housekeepers after extracting her rent (Bloody Basil 2017). Sometimes, a specific broker is the only "system of access" for the housekeeper to preserve her job, even if she faces unhuman working conditions: long working hours or sexual abuses (Obaed 2003).

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The sociology of brokerage proves to be helpful in highlighting the multilevel relations of exploitation underlying the Palestinian-Israeli economic relations. On the meso-level of analysis Palestinian economic actors are not inclusively sorted out as exploited parties vis-à-vis the Israel colonial structure. On the contrary, different Palestinian-Israeli segments are occupying in-between positions as profit-seekers or opportunistic players. It should be emphasized that brokerage is not limited to the wage-labor market (see table 2). Several studies had already touched slightly on the role of intermediaries and middlemen in renewing monopoly contracts between the PA and the Israeli private sector (Lagerquist 2003) or laundering the settlement products to facilitate its marketing worldwide (Dana and Shihadeh 2012). Moreover, the role of the Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affair in as the exclusive Palestinian party to coordinate with the Israeli military in issuing of the Businessman Card (BMC), a prestigious passing-permit, can offer a different type of institutionalized brokerage system that rests on patronage and fraud relations (SH Interview 2019); a well-know, yet largely under-researched, phenomena. Finally, certain Palestinian high-tech ventures in Ramallah and Rawabi cities can also be conceived as broker-companies as long as they bridge between Israeli software projects and Palestinian talents (Goichman 2018; Nakhleh 2012).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to critically reflect on and expand the literature on the Palestinian political economy under occupation by highlighting the variety of roles that Palestinian actors currently hold in the West Bank-Israeli economic integration. Two inter-disciplinary knowledge bodies were proposed: Borderland literature was called upon to understand how Israeli colonial structures are actually affecting economic integration. Instead of perceiving dividing lines, and separating edifices, daily encounter proves that borders cemented the West Bank-Israeli economic cooperation by “illegal” or “informal” means. The segregation regime which has been conceived as an Israeli tool to manipulate the “power of topography”, gave rise to unanticipated “topography of powers”: new economic relations, hierarchies of power and more economic integration. Furthermore, the sociology of brokerage disturbs the simple dichotomous relationships between dominating colonizer and subjugated colonizer that characterizes the

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macro level of analysis. It allows us to identify the central role of different types of linkage positions between what have been conceived as two self-sustained poles of a relationship.

The highly unequal economic relations between the West Bank and Israel are clearly skewed towards benefiting the Israeli interests. However, this critical conclusion is dominated by an aggregated view that unintentionally obscures the active role of different Palestinian profit-seeking actors and opportunistic players. These segments do not only exist as capitalist classes who flourished inside the Palestinian economy and benefited internally through their patronage links with the PA (Bouillon 2004; Dana 2015; Hanieh 2011). Nor are they merely individuals who were derived by their "agency of survival" to innovate new profit-seeking crafts such as porters, peddlers and drivers who relocated their activities near crowded checkpoints(Hammami 2010; Tawil-Souri 2009). On the contrary, there are various social classes who grow as parasites on the body of the colonial system. As they "made use" of the gaps and contradictions of the Israeli occupation structures to improve their life chances, they were in fact accelerating the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration.

The reproduction of the Palestinian economy as dependent on, and integrated into, the Israeli economy is not only pushed by the colonial regulations, but is sometimes also reinforced by Palestinian mediators whose role is institutionalized within the colonial structure. This implies that the day-to-day functioning of many Palestinian economic activities relies on the occupation infrastructure, including settlements. Any engagement in the political economy of the Palestinian-Israeli economic integration should not exclude the myriad interlinks, and relations of power, that are being classified as "illegal" or "informal". In fact, these relationships constantly deepen economic integration.

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