

Collaboration in Struggle in Palestine: The Search for a Third Space

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Conceptual Introduction

This article is inspired by theories of space, power and knowledge in a spurious way but could not have been written had I not attempted some engagement with these important epistemological understandings of how humans and space interconnect. As Foucault commented ‘it is surprising how long the problem of space took time to emerge as a historic-political problem’.¹ I must admit I am one of those who took some time to acquaint themselves with ‘this problem’.

The result of this short foray into concepts of space and power is an attempt to present in this article collaborative resistance in the history of modern Palestine as a kind of a third space modality which is based on two parameters: distance and time. I ask how far is the distance one is willing to travel out of one’s ethnic, ideological or national comfort zone in order to create a joint space and how much time is one willing to spend inside this space?

In third space I refer here to the notions which were discussed ably by Alessandro Soja in his seminal work from 1996, *Thirdspace*², as well as to the conceptualizations of space in history as they emerged, among other places, in the critique of Henri Lefebvre on Foucault’s position on spatial conceptualization.³ Lefebvre saw Foucault’s interventions on space as celebrating individualism and neglecting collective effort to engage within a

given space. Lefebvre's distinction, based on two different usages of the term power in French, between power that knowledge serves and knowledge that refuses to acknowledge power is the main basis for this critique that exposed for Marxists the absence of resistance in the Foucauldian 'spiral forays' as Soja called them.⁴

Unlike Foucault, Lefebvre wrote in an accessible manner and hence his critique seemed flippant to Soja but at least it was clear. Lefebvre claimed Foucault did not bridge the gap between the space of the philosophers and that of the real people (which would be another example for a 'sanctified opposition' Foucault ridiculed as being part of the way discourse governs our life).⁵

But I found Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* in particular useful here. For him space is 'fundamentally bound up with social reality' whereby individuals are constantly preoccupied with producing and defining their space.⁶ For him the space is produced by people's experience living in it; people's representations of it and by the symbols associated with it. In his jargon there are three elements in the analysis of space: spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representations. For Lefebvre space can be either contested constantly or shared.

It is on the margins of this debate – of how to share third spaces - that I offer to look at space, as a multilayered spot which is defined by affinities, ideologies, identities and life's requirements. This matrix of impacts help to illustrate both what does collaboration in resistance means in cases such as Palestine as well as the role such transition from one space to the other signify for reconciliation efforts there and elsewhere.

It is this very liberally defined third space, the peripheral place where people out of power, challenge power or at least attempt not to succumb to

power which either identifies them as the Other, the periphery or claims to speak in their name - as nationalism does - that this article focuses on.

To simplify the picture we can think of a space in the context of the dichotomies that existed in Palestine, ever since the arrival of Zionism there in 1882, as diametrically opposed locations that are segregated sometimes conceptually or verbally, and as time physically. The space of 'us' and the 'others' appears first as a Zionist vision, then as a strategy and eventually as a reality. The Palestinian designation of 'our space' is far more elusive and changes in reaction to the assertive Zionist demands of carving real and imaginary gated and exclusive spaces in Palestine.

A third space in this respect is one which Zionists forsake their safe, and later after 1948, hegemonic spaces they occupy and substitute them with a third space realities – where they lose the hegemony. There is also a historical trajectory that locates eventually them in the space of the other, if collaboration in resistance to their own space is what motivated them.

For the Palestinians, in parallel history that began in 1882, opting for a third space would be a venture out of the familiar and more secure national, and in many ways, anti-colonial, space into a post-colonial, discourse or visions, without yet the realization of such a reality. As the colonization of Palestine continues until today; not surprisingly this hardly occurs. So we should focus on the colonisers' ability to create a third space of a kind.

Where Palestinians did venture out of their own national space was when under existential circumstances they found themselves in as a result of the Zionist colonization of Palestine. The shared physically spaces with the newcomers at various moments of the history of the conflict in Palestine; in some cases this was a collaboration of a kind. When these were sites of join

industrial action of business enterprises – and there were quite a few – those present in such a space were asked to challenge dominant paradigms or interpretations of reality that regularly shaped the unique conditions in colonized and Zionised Palestine.

A good way of exemplifying a third space realities as collaboration is to point to the lack of such collaboration in the various attempts to conduct a political dialogue between the Jewish settlers and the native population of Palestine. Almost all of these attempts since 1882 and until today (apart from the Oslo accord of 1993) were forced upon the two communities. But more importantly they were efforts to solidify two spaces and create a buffer between them rather than seeking any collaboration. And therefore the liberal Zionist historiography that depicts such dialogues as collaboration is misleading to my mind.⁷ There are two interrelated points of critique on this approach. The first is that the representation of the conflict as a whole as one raging between two national movement, and not as anti-colonialist struggle, is questionable. Secondly, even if one accepts the need for such political dialogue, third space is created when ‘peace’ breaks out or is envisaged as the end result of intensive diplomatic efforts to settle feuds on land and power. This article is written under the conviction that the conflict in Palestine is a colonialist one and thus the only collaboration we are looking for is anti and post colonialist.

The basic paradigm that enabled a third space is the one that is attempted while there is a mutual recognition of an imbalanced reality in our case spaces which are interlocked in oppressive relationship between a colonizer and colonized, or invaders and invaded. The journey into the third space for the member of the settler community is powerful – it negates dimensions such as justice and Moral Rights – on which the settling

project was based; even if not necessarily motivated by them. The native moves into the third space in recognition of the possible heterogeneous nature of the settler community and even acceptance of some agency for the settlers in determining the future which may produce a native invitation for the settler to stay. As the time passes by, as we shall see in Israel and Palestine, it would become more difficult for the settlers' next generations to envisage joint spaces, due to the impressive success to create an exclusive one while for the Palestinians the next generations of settlers would drive home the message of permanency and a need to include them in a any future vision.

Was Bi-nationalism Collaboration?

The weakness of the settler community in the early years, the doubts and the residues of more universal ideologies that once shaped the move out of Europe, all motivated a handful of Zionists to look for a different frame in their relationship with the native population, although one should not exaggerate the scope of this phenomenon.

Similarly, these very attributes of the settlers in the beginning of their project can explain why the local native population could believe in their ability of returning the clock backwards; namely pushing the settlers back to their countries of origin, as quite few anti-colonial movements succeeded in doing. Such a conviction acted as an disincentive to move to the third space of collaboration in struggle. But the with a third generation of settlers, the colonial movement becomes in the eyes of the natives a

settler colonialist one; namely both pragmatically, and possibly ethically, the vision of expulsion is waning and eventually disappears completely.

The first significant endeavor to create a third space of a kind was attempted by the Palestine Communist Party. The trajectory of this party from an all-Jewish party on its inception to a bi-national party in 1937 - when Palestinians were admitted to the party continued after 1948 in a different orientation. It transformed from a bi-national outfit into Palestinian national party supported by Communist and socialist Jews. However, its discourse, platforms and positionalities were still loyal to bi-nationalism.⁸

The communist party during the mandatory period was involved in industrial action where the action itself, strike or protest, was short lived, and indeed while it occurred settlers and natives were on par demanding the same agenda from the British mandatory government or from Jewish and Palestinian employers. This joint labour history was already recorded and commended by writers such as Zachary Lockman, Lev Greenberg, David De Freis, Debby Bernstein and many others.⁹ It is worthwhile recanting here some of its more significant landmarks in the mandatory history. But as this article I hope will clarify, in order to examine the issues of collaboration in resistance – the litmus test is the attitude to the colonization of Palestine and not to its capitalization or rapid modernization. Invaders were not welcome even if they suggested new ways of improving the conditions of live and work of the farmers and labourers of Palestine. They included joint strikes for better working conditions in sites such as the cement factory in Haifa and the British owned train workshops in the 1920s; the privately owned buses and trucks

companies in the early 1930s and even in 1946 when Palestine was already burning at the very end of the mandate, Jews and Palestinian junior clerks went on a strike against the government's payment policies.¹⁰

In some, but not in all of these junctures the Communist party played a role. But its moment of truth came in 1947 and it did not pass it, to put it mildly, with flying colours.

The party faced an impossible paradox which it could not solve. It was impossible to maintain for long a Marxist Jewish-Arab party line that accepted the national rights of Jews in Palestine (and regarded the Jewish action against the British mandatory authorities as anti-colonialist) on the one hand at the same time joining in the Palestinian struggle against Zionist dispossession under British umbrella, on the other.

When this proved too much the party split on the eve of the end of the mandate. The Jewish dominated the communist party, supported the UN 1947 partition of Palestine, the sale of Soviet weapons to the Jewish forces that ethnically cleansed Palestine while the Palestinians Defense League that left the party jointed the abortive Palestinian effort to protect Palestine from this dispossession.

Obviously for the vast majority of the Palestinian members in the communist party at the very last moment before the creation of the Jewish state bi-nationality was not a model for collaboration in resistance. But the position of these very activists would change drastically after the creation of the state and they would become the heralds, and principal supporters, of the two states' solutions in which Palestinians were at best asked to give up eighty percent of Palestine for a Jewish State (be it one that was supposed to respect the rights of the Palestinians in it as a national minority).

The communist party's insistence, reflected also in its support for the UN partition plan of November 1947, to grant parity to both national movements defeated these higher levels of cooperation in the liberation struggle. Accepting Zionism as a national movement, defeated any achievement and elation gained by striking together against the mandatory government's payment policy or even the exclusivist nature of the Jewish trade unions.

However since labour rights and issues are such a crucial part of life in any society, the communist party's focus on these issues after 1948 kept it alive as a political outfit; even after the collapse of the USSR. But in an incremental and exponential line, the discourse, as well as the action of the party members and leaders had to be imbedded in the Palestinian national movement and distance the party from Zionism and Jewish nationalism. The agenda was class orientated and social but it remained relevant because it was part of the more general anti-colonialist Palestinian struggle, including inside Israel, against Zionism. The inability to say this in public, which among other difficulties could also lead to outlawing of the party in Israel today, is a discursive and pragmatic issue, not one of essence.

So I hope the readers agree with me that the communist party as well as the history of joint industrial action in mandatory Palestine, and to certain extent - also this is much rarer - in Israel, is part of the history of collaboration in resistance in Palestine and it was achieved through short periods in which joint spaces of action were created. It also produced some joint marriages, which in the exclusivist and segregationist Zionist vision and practice was and still is dreaded and almost not existent. The fact that I know all these couples, including those who alas passed away, justify Yuval

Yonai's assumption that there is no community for research here due to the paucity of the phenomenon.¹¹ But none the less, marriage is a double edged struggle and in an apartheid-like reality a third space worth integrating into this alternative history.

But while accepting that bi-national cooperation failed to be easily fitted into a collaborative paradigm of joint struggle it does not necessarily imply that today such a cooperation is equally unsuitable. This is reflected today in the debate among those who believe that the one state solution is the best way forward in Israel and Palestine but cannot agree on the model the unitary state would adhere to: a bi-national one in respect of the two national spaces created or a democratic state with equal citizenships that create a new non-national space all together.¹²

The Bizarre Case of Brit Shalom

There was another outfit that attempted the bi-national paradigm in the mandatory period, *Brit Shalom*, later renamed *Ihud*. It was founded in 1925 by a group of Jewish settlers, most of whom were academics and intellectuals. They believed in the creation of mandatory state, in which the Jewish and 'Arab' communities would be defined a national autonomies, enjoying the same equal rights under the British sovereignty. Like all mandatory systems at the time, this mandated state was a transitional phase meant to lead to full independence of a future bi-national state.

In many ways these Jews were the successors of Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginzburg); the Jewish intellectual that suggested that Zionism would only be implemented as a spiritual and cultural – but not political – project. He also suggested not to continue with the project unless the local population consented to it.

However, it should be stressed that the members of this group saw themselves as Zionists with a better idea of how to implement the ideals of the movement. Among them one could find luminaries such as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Hugo Bergman and many others.¹³

It only had a handful of members and due to the animosity of the Jewish community around them and lack of interest of the Palestinian population in their ideas the movement was dismantled in 1933. It tried in the last days of the Mandate to resurrect with a different name *Ihud*, which even succeeded in recruiting a member of the leading Palestinian family in the land, the Husaynis (and who alas was murdered for that) – but it was also short lived and disappeared.¹⁴

But it is a fascinating historical case study for our examination. As in the case of the communist party the first and second spaces, so to speak, had ethically and politically an equal standing in the eyes of the Jews propagating bi-nationalism. When such an idea is offered during the first generation of settlers it has very little attraction within an anti-colonialist struggle. This did not mean that cohabitation or accommodation, from the native's point of view was impossible. Provided they came as asylum seekers, or even immigrants, but not as ideologues seeking to dispossess that native population.

This range of possibilities was recognized by Mahatma Gandhi. The leading figure in *Brit Shalom*, the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, was seeking Gandhi's endorsement to the basic idea of Zionism as a movement that has a right to settle in Palestine but should not harm the rights of the naïve people. A glimpse into the *problematique* of our subject matter can be gathered from re-reading the correspondence between these two great men.¹⁵ One cannot think of someone more amiable for a possible coexistence in mandatory Palestine than this Jewish philosopher. Both the correspondence between the two and the very nature and purpose of *Brit Shalom* highlight the paradigmatic predicament I have outlined earlier on. Gandhi refused to accept Buber's claim that by their presence in Palestine the Jewish settlers established a moral right they had to the land, although he respected Buber's additional assertion that this right did not justify any dispossession or challenging the right of the indigenous people to the land. Gandhi was only too familiar with the gist of moral justifications Western colonialists provided for taking over other people's land and wished Buber to accept the very immorality of colonization on the one hand, and the noble desire of Jews to see a safe haven from persecution anywhere in the world, including in Palestine, on the other.

Thus even the paradigm of Buber did not leave much hope for a joint struggle although it was benign and peaceful one. Similarly *Brit Shalom* was based on a certain parity for a joint struggle for the sake of both national movements. The idea of a bi-national state was put forward by these intellectuals when the Zionist settlement was a minority and was not yet certain of international recognition.

This is why it is so different from bi-nationalism today, where the option of expunging the settler community are non-existent; nor are they realistic or

desired. Bi-nationalism today from the vantage point of power and possession, is a dramatic self-dismantling the settlers' regime, not existence. Accepting this paradigm today demands significant concessions from the native national liberation movement – most of important of which to accept whatever is incurred in recognizing your invader as a national movement on your land. It should be noted that several Palestinians, among them the late Edward Said, were willing to create that third space by supporting the model of a bi-national state as the end result of a reconciliation process.

But even today bi-nationalism as a third space poses serious question. It applies a parity to a place where a century of disparity – namely colonization and dispossession. Does this mean that the history of this disparity is forgotten, absolved as a result of accepting the bi-national model? Can this paradigm return, or compensate for, what the invasion and dispossession robbed to its lawful owners - while recognizing which part of the past realities cannot be returned or rectified? Only if bin-nationalism as a political outfit can be respond favourably to these queries, it may stand a chance.

A good example for such a realization of the bi-national model would be the future interrelation between the Palestinian refugees' right of return, which would have to be respected, and the continued right of Jews to immigrate to Palestine, which would have to be negotiated with the Palestinian side. It is in a way a third space of social and cultural cohabitation on a bi-national basis, while recognizing the national Palestinian character and nature of the country.

Alternative Models of Collaboration in the post 1948 Era.

In the past the bi-national model failed to absorb genuinely with the basic reality Zionism created – a dispossessed Palestine and the making of an exclusive Jewish space there. It was very difficult to argue, at least morally, in the early stages of the Zionist colonization, against the only decent solution for the settler and invader – to return to their home countries.

And yet life is more complex and insoluble paradoxes that need not always to be reconciled and thus the third spaces created by Palestinian and Jewish truck drivers. Industrial workers and junior clerks, were positive aspects of a fragmented and oppressed realities. Sixty five years later these third spaces become inspirational models for the future.

Indeed it is the premise of this article is that such paradigmatic positions of collaboration in resistance have a certain fluency, to the point of dramatically transforming, within changing historical circumstances. The Palestinian struggle had to change given the dispossession of Palestine in 1948 and the fragmentation geographically of the Palestinian people that inevitably produced also different strategies of survival and struggle while adhering to some consensual precepts and aspirations.

But this is not a clear cut position. It is very difficult to accept that a liberation movement would wholeheartedly collaborate with anyone for the liberation of fifth of the homeland while leaving half of the people in exile.

For the Palestinian resistance movement that emerged in and around the refugee camps and adopted third world liberation ideologies and praxis there was little interest in collaboration with vast Jewish Israeli

constituency as the basic aim was to transform radically the nature of the state and in many ways try and bring the historical clock backwards as was stated in the two PLO charters of the late 1960s – bring it back to the juncture before the arrival of Jewish settlers in the land.

This ideological premise changed somewhat in the very early 1970s. Palestinian Liberation struggle included a new concept that allowed for cooperation with what was already then defined as progressive forces in Israel. There was an interesting difference between the main Palestinian organization, the *Fatah's* take on this issue and the more left outfits' stance such as that adopted by the PFLP and PDFLP.

The *Fatah* developed a stages' strategy for liberation, which led it to accept later on the idea of a two states solution. But the *Fatah's* idea was functional: you liberate what you can now and wait until a better opportunity.

The two states' solution, as I have shown in an article in this very journal, was born in post 1967 Israel and was the brainchild of the Zionist left. Both views accepted that the Palestinian state would be stretched over 22 per cent of Palestine – but the Zionist left, and later the Zionist center and right which accepted the idea – demanded that this would a finite solution. It is possible that some elements in the *Fatah* accepted that interpretation as well – time will tell.

It is however doubtful if one can call this interaction a form of collaborative struggle. It was more akin to information exchange and a joint effort to build a lobby inside Israel for the idea of two states solution that became a corner stone for the Left Zionist groups centered mainly around two political parties the communist party and a left Zionist party, *Meretz*. These connections served eventually the more systematized connection between

the PLO and the Israeli government towards the Oslo accord, facilitated not by these very contacts, but rather by the regional and global changes that saw the USA become the sole superpower in the area and the elimination of a strong front on non-aligned regimes aided by the Soviet union that in the past rejected such cooperation.

Pragmatism on both sides should not be mistaken for collaboration in the struggle and in fact because it was not that, however genuine the relations between the *Fatah* and left Zionist individuals and organizations were, the whole process of contact, and eventually the so called peace process, were in the main a cynical Israeli ploy to substitute an increasingly unfavorable internationally occupation with a continued occupation under the guise of a so called peace process that led to nowhere. It is clear in retrospect that for the PLO this was not the intended or coveted result of this contact and some of the frustration of the way the negotiations developed and the reality they produced – including the transformation of a liberation organization like the *Fatah* into a security sub-contractor of Israel in the occupied territories - led to the last attempt at armed struggle by the *Fatah* (together with the *Hamas* that rejected this paradigm from a political Islamist point of view – although never broadcasting any clear alternative) in the second Intifada.

The Genuine Third Space

A different model was attempted by anti-Zionist individuals and outfits inside Israel in conjunction with Palestinian organisations; mainly on the left. These Israelis were marginalised and ostracized in their society and

therefore are brought here not as a recognition for their impact, but rather to the immense difficulty in constructing such a model after 1948.

The best way of illuminating their model is by providing a prosopography of their political biographies. They all regarded themselves as anti Zionists although they usually began their political career as very devoted Zionists, many of them fought with the Jewish forces in 1948, in the Israeli army and even in the security or other government establishment before they all went through a certain moment of truth, an epiphany, that opened their eyes and pushed out the tribe's boundaries. They included people such as Maxim Gilan, Israel Shahak and Akiva Or . Their life stories indicate they were individualistic, marginalised and Quixotic in many ways.¹⁶

There were two ways of becoming a Jewish anti-Zionist in the state of Israel. You either left the tribe of Zionism because you witnessed a particular behaviour in the name of Zionism which was so abhorrent that it made you rethink the validity of the ideology that licensed such brutality; or, alternatively, you were a thinker by profession or inclination who did not cease to ponder and revisit the concepts and precepts of Zionism and it was their internal paradoxes and absurdities that gradually drifted you away towards a more universal and far more anti-Zionist, position in life. Israel Shahak was one such person. The fusion of nationalism and religion was a lethal combination which reminded Shahak of the policies that trampled his life in Nazi occupied Poland where he was born and from where he escaped to Palestine in 1948.

This combination of disgust by the way Arabs were treated in the state and intellectual rejection of the very logic of the dogma motivated this unique group. For one it was the way Palestinian prisoners were treated in front of his eyes; for another it was encountering the daily interpretations of the

Jewish rabbinical laws in the newly founded Israel and being distressed by the specific way it was applied towards, or should we say against, non-Jews, namely the Palestinian citizens.

The political home for these early Jewish doubters of Zionism in Israel was the Communist party, but soon most of them left it, either continuing individually or within new small outfits, which eventually sought alliances with the PLO, and in particular with Left wing factions in it such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Any such action was treated in Israel as high treason, and hence, most of these activists paid a very high price. Maxim Gilan was arrested for exposing the Israeli involvement in the assassination of Mahdi Ben Barka, the leader of the Moroccan opposition in 1966 for which he set in jail for a quite a long time. Others too were treated in a similar way. Such was fate of Michael Warshavski, Uri Davis and Udi Adiv to mention but few.

Most of them left Israel in 1972, when Golda Meir was the Prime Minister and when they thought there was no hope whatsoever for change. They developed false hopes of an imminent change when the Oslo accord was signed in 1993 only to be disillusioned about the ability of Israel to change or transform itself.

All these brave people were introduced into the Israeli public arena after the 1967 war and sounded even more relevant after the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987. Their actions of these lone riders was accompanied and in many ways complimented by a more systemized and organised effort. Small outfits appeared proclaiming themselves as anti-Zionist. Foremost among them was *Matzpen* (Compass in Hebrew). It was formed in 1962 by four members: Moshe Mahover, Akiva Or, Oded Pilevski and Yirmiyahu Kaplan who were thrown out from the Israeli communist party

for their criticism of the party's unconditional support for the USSR and demanded an open democratic discussion in the party about it.

If you read the personal memoirs of some of the founders of *Matzpen* you can see that the personal narrative has always a formative event. For Akiva Or it was a brutal break out of a sailors' strike by the Israeli TUC; for Michel Warshavski, Mikado, it was the expulsion of the villages near Latrun in 1967.

There is a fascinating website in Hebrew where most living members of the organization tell us why they became anti-Zionist.¹⁷ The formative event that sobers them up usually evolved around exposing Zionism as colonialism, Israel as an apartheid state, and America as an evil imperialism. Abigail Abarbanel recently induced a large number of Jews and Israeli to describe their trajectories which completes this dissident archive for future historians.¹⁸

Matzpen was born, as a recent book put it, twice: Once in 1962 and then again in 1967.¹⁹ It was incarnated after the occupation as the main movement opposing it, before the cause was taken by a more mainstream Zionist movement Peace Now. Until that happened it was at the height of its popularity among the young Left (but was still included a mere few hundreds all in all of members and supporters).

Those who remained in *Mazpen* with time developed close relationship with the Palestinian Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine manifested in a joint declaration of the two bodies calling for the replacing Israel with a federal socialist state with equal cultural and civil rights to all as part of larger regional transformation of the Middle East into a free socialist United States. More specifically it called upon the government to withdraw unilaterally from the occupied 1967 territories. It also took an

active part in building the solidarity movement with the Palestinians in the western world. In the 1980s it slowly dissipated: each member choosing a different way forward until it disappeared totally.

Whoever they were, and however they organised, they all failed politically to sway behind them any significant number of Jews and they were the first to learn, what others understood later, that challenging Zionism from within the Jewish society is a Sisyphean and ungrateful mission.

Not surprising some individual Jews caught in this kind of cooperation went as far as adopting the tactics of guerrilla warfare but they were a handful. Mazpiten disappeared in the early 1980s and the various groups succeeding it had only a very small number of Jews in them. The model however of accepting the lead of the Palestinian struggle, even when the issue of who represents the Palestinians became blurred after Oslo, and still is, did serve a template for the non and anti-Zionist activists, most of them young people in this century. It was a model that followed White people's action in South Africa within the ANC and not surprisingly is more generally connected to comparing Israel to Apartheid South Africa with all the inevitable consequences of such a comparison: including the emergence later on of the BDS strategy in the West.

Finally, one can see how difficult it is to build a paradigm of collaboration in the struggle against oppression in Israel when academics are concerned. It was a rare breed before the 1990s, it became quite a phenomenon in the 1990s described as the post-Zionist movement – where academics deconstructed all aspects of Zionism in the past and the present – and disappeared again after 2000. In many ways, Uri Davis, an anthropologist was the first to use his professional knowledge to challenge Zionism had on

while joining officially the PLO as part of his collaboration (only one other Israeli Jew did it – Ilan Halevy). This was a break from the famous human rights fighter in Israel, Israel Shahak, who was a chemist who looked for way of struggling against oppression. He, by the way, was an actual seeker of the third space, condemning nationalism wherever he found it – which led to clash also with the PLO.

Davis was one of the first to fuse his professional interest with his political commitment. He used his anthropological qualifications to expose the Apartheid nature of the state of Israel.²⁰ In many ways he set an example for the next generation of how to confront professionally Zionism within the Israeli academia and in one's own discipline – the inevitable price for which was losing his job in that academia (many years later, another anthropologist who deconstructed bravely the production of knowledge on Arabs, the *Mizrahim* and particular Bedouin Women, Smadar Lavi would suffer a similar fate).²¹

You could teach sciences and hold anti-Zionist views but you could not teach Zionism as a dissident professional social or human scientist in the local universities. Until Davis, also one could not question the scholarly quality of the critique on Zionism and dismiss it as purely political and ideological tracts. The value of the work of those who were tackling these issues outside the professional purview of the Israeli academia is that the academics who later revisited the same issues and topics as professionals, owe much to their courage and industrious labour as laymen and activists. In the 1990s, especially after the signing of the Oslo accord, for a moment it seemed many more academics in Israel were collaborating in the struggle in a similar way. But this is a false impression. After few years of daring to

question basic truisms of Zionism in their academic work, the vast majority of these scholars retracted back to the warm embrace of the Zionist consensus.

In the 21st century, the creation of thirdspace was noted away from direct activism or critical scholarship. In one particular area the first attempts were made to turn a kindergarten or a school into a temporary shared space. More often than not in surrounding which were not themselves transformed into thridspaces and the scholarship on these few institutions is split between those who see it as the precursor of a more fundamental change and those who alas predict its danger of being cast into historical oblivion.

Other areas where such cohabitation was attempted with various degrees of success was gender activism. The split between a western orientated Feminist movement and a Mizrahi one (with a similar split within the Palestinian feminist activism – reflecting a larger one affecting feminism in the Arab world as a whole) testify to power of nationalism, ethnocentricity and the colonialist conditions over the urge to share spaces on the basis of gender.

Conclusions

I will not dwell too long on future paradigms. I will only comment that they are not necessarily emerging from an analysis of the past, but rather in the spirit of the thridspace basic human impulse are a living spatial experience that may clash with perceived or constructed definitions of human space.

And by that I mean that on the ground, more often than not, in every localized and limited way, communities in Israel and Palestine desegregate an imposed segregated reality from above – through their schools, NGOs, business and sexual interests, sometime common criminal activity, intellectual and artistic ventures and almost engaging jointly in every other possible human interaction. Neither Zionism nor Palestinian nationalism favour these interactions. Nor do they have a chance to mature as long as Israeli occupation, colonization and ethnic cleansing continue. But they may serve a 21st century model of cooperation of liberation not just of the land but also of the people. After all, the Arab world removed the shackles of colonialism in the 1950s but people only now are raging and acting for their own liberation, not just that of their lands. Palestine will not be a different case study in this zeitgeist of ours that reintegrates the individual and her freedoms into a world in which big ideologies of oppression and liberation seemed to dwarf and ignore.

Palestinian refugees looking for life and not fearing this is a refutation of the right of return (*Tawtin* which mean in a derogative way naturalization in a host country where the refugees reside), Palestinian in Israel building a normal existence without being accused of (*Tatbi'* which means normalization with the Zionist entity) and Palestinians under occupation refusing to give up the very small pleasure of life Israel constantly denies them are the harbingers of this other model that hopefully would come to our shores sooner rather than later.

But more importantly than anything else in my mind and the *condito sine qua non* for a vibrant and vital thridspace is a Jewish Israeli acknowledgement that Zionism is a settler colonialist movement still busy these days in trying and complete the dispossession of Palestine and that a

paradigm shift can only emerge in the camp of the coloniser and the occupier. The rest can only follow from such a historical moment; if it were ever to come.

¹ Quoted in Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996, page 71 and see Michel Foucault's general discussion in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, New York: Vintage books, 1980.

² Edward Soja, *Third Space*.

³ See the discussion in Soja *Thirdspace*, pp. 7-8 and in Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Essays, Lectures*, Stockholm: Axl Books, pp. 269-270.

⁴ Soja, *Thirdspace*, pp. 7-9.

⁵ Soja, *ibid*, p.8.

⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 69.

⁷ Christian Schmid, 'Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space' in Kanisha Goonewaadena (ed.), *Space, Difference and Every Day Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, Routledge: London 2008, p. 28.

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¹⁸ Avigail Abarbanel, *Beyond tribal Loyalties: Personal Stories of Jewish Peace Activists*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012.

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