

Abstract

Zahraa ZAWAWI

Public spaces in Palestinian cities have been significantly reshaped during the Israeli military occupation, both on the physical (morphological) and the socio-economic level. Most researchers studying the spatial aspects of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict (Halper 2001, Weizman 2002, Falah 2003, Hanafi 2003, Weizman 2003, Graham 2004, Petti 2005, Abujidi and Verschure 2006, Weizman 2006, Weizman 2007) have focused on macro and meso-levels of abstraction by investigating national, territorial and urban scales. This research, however, takes a more micro-level approach by investigating two public spaces, namely Dawar and Manara, the main public spaces of the cities of Nablus and Ramallah. In order to reflect on the effects of power conflicts on public spaces, we analyze the transformation and production of public spaces in Palestine during the First (1987–1993) and Second (2000–2005) Intifadas. Political power forms and transforms physical layouts while citizens produce public spaces through every day practices, uses and—in our case—explicit forms of resistance.

To be able to analyze the different relations in space this research first developed a conceptual framework for situating spatial power relations. Michel Foucault's (1977, 1984) concepts and analysis of power-space are a starting point, however; his work does not discuss the role of social actors in producing their spaces. We, therefore, complement Foucault's approach with Henri Lefebvre's (1991) conception of the production of space. This framework is then applied to Dawar and Manara during the two Intifadas in order to study their transformation and production during these specific time periods.

In conclusion: the two powers dialectically implemented by the Israeli military occupation in Dawar and Manara (discipline and sovereign) during the two Intifadas produced a shift in the organisation, the meaning and the perception of space. They also generated different modes of Palestinian resistance. Dawar and Manara, in the two different political periods, became sites of struggle, spaces appropriated temporarily and permanently both by the Palestinian resistance and by the Israeli military occupying power.