THE SHARED HOMELAND PARADIGM

In/dependence / Interdependence

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For the Alternative Lexicon for Palestine-Israel

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1. Introduction: A century of unequal in/dependence

The struggle for national *independence* has been at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from its earliest days. During the first half of the 20th century, both sides have gradually developed a distinct national awareness and a desire for political independence. The two national independence movements grew and hardened in tandem, in opposition to each other despite a reality on the ground of porous boundaries and social mixing, especially in the large "mixed" cities such as Jerusalem and Jaffa – namely, a reality of *interdependence*.

In sociological terms, one could say that the growing aspiration for national independence – and its manifestation through geographical separation – were the result of competing "principles of vision and division" (Bourdieu, 1989). So that "nationality", which was hardly a credible vision for the motely communities of Ottoman Palestine at the beginning of the century, quickly overcame other possible social divisions based on class, religion, education, urbanity, etc. (see Marom, 2014). After all, a bourgeois Jew living in Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv and a bourgeois Muslim living in King George's Avenue in Jaffa probably had more in common with each other than each of them had, respectively, with an "Old Yishuv" Jew in Jerusalem or a Falah in the Galilee. This interdependence in the case of Tel Aviv and Jaffa was clearly captured in 1925 by Patrick Geddes when making his famous plan for Tel Aviv – but it might be more generally applicable to any place where Jews and Arabs found themselves living in spatial proximity and economic connection:

> "With all respect to the ethnic distinctiveness and the civic individuality of Tel-Aviv, as Township, its geographic, social, and even fundamental economic situation is determined by its position as Northern Jaffa… The old town [Jaffa], the modern Township [Tel Aviv], must increasingly work and grow together…" (Geddes, 1925)

However, with the rise in mutual hostilities and violence through the 1930-40s, the vision of "growing togther" has turned decisively to "growing apart". This was manifested in a succession of *partition* plans (Peel, Woodhead) for two independent polities, Arab and Jewish, in Mandatory Palestine, and culminated with the 1947 UN Partition Plan for Palestine, which drew convoluted boundary lines and a set of ostensibly independent but physically interlocking enclaves. On the heels of this policy of partition for the sake of double independence, the 1948 *War of Independence* led to the creation of only one independent state, Israel, the long-coveted homeland for the Jewish people; whereas the *Naqba* brought about the loss of homeland and exile for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. This one-sided independence in a context of continuous (though unsettled) interdependence has since fed the decades-long conflict.

Following the 1967 war, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip led to increased political and economic *dependence* of the Palestinians on Israel through escalating measures of control, exploitation, and suppression. Most Palestinians worked within the Israeli labor market, albeit as poorly paid day laborers; most Palestinian trade was either with or through Israel, which fully controlled the currency, customs, taxation, and regulation; and most services and infrastructures were (inadequately) provided by Israel. Needless to say, dependence breeds inequality and discord. As economic dependence tightened, physical separation first grew less harsh in the 1970-80s, but following the First (1987) and Second (2001) Intifadas, a regime of *hardened separation* ensued in the Oslo and post-Oslo years, manifested in the separation barrier in the West Bank and the fortified fences and walls around the Gaza Strip – but also inside Israel itself (Yacobi and Cohen, 2007). While this unstable combination of unequal dependence and hardening separation became entrenched, the mainstream solution to the conflict – two *separate and independent* states – continued to stall and stagnate. The vision of an independent Palestinian state side by side Israel was further eroded against the reality of relentless settlement in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Tragically, October 7th and the pursuing war in Gaza seem to have destroyed not only the dream of peace between two independent states but even the illusion of enforced separation maintaining unequal dependence. The shocking collapse of the state-of-the-art obstacle between Gaza and Israel, which was supposed to be impenetrable, has led many Israelis to doubt that they would ever be willing to live next to Palestinians, even with a wall separating them. While after two years of massive bombardments and the near total destruction of Gaza's built environment, Palestinians feel that this is not only a second Naqba but war against their very survival as a people. On both sides, primordial sentiments of "*us or them*" are replacing the fragile relics of independence with an existential sense of *irreconcilability* of the two peoples and polities.

2. Ecological: Interdependence as entanglement

Following this very brief and inevitably oversimplified history of unequal in/dependence in Israel/Palestine, I want to start off this lexical investigation of interdependence by addressing its ecological and anthropological foundations. I am inspired by Tim Ingold's specific notion of *entanglement*, beautifully drawn in his essay, *Bindings against boundaries: Entanglements of life in an open world* (Ingold, 2008). For Ingold, entanglements, or bindings, are the elemental dynamics of the world, since any form of life is always bound to the "elements" of the world, moving along interweaving lines and paths, and interacting with others forms of life, earth, water, and air. Entanglement is a very different condition than simply being connected to something, and it is certainly not a network made of interconnected nodes: "It is not, then, that

organisms are entangled in relations. Rather, every organism – every thing – is itself an entanglement, a tissue of knots whose constituent strands, as they become tied up with other strands, in other bundles, make up the meshwork" (ibid, 1806).

This entails a very different notion of the environment: "What we have been accustomed to calling 'the environment' might, then, be better envisaged as a *zone of entanglement*. Within this tangle of interlaced trails, continually ravelling here and unravelling there, beings grow… along the lines of their relationships" (ibid, 1807). The human "built environment" – whether cities, infrastructures, national territories, or border fortifications – is no different. These are also "zones of entanglement", constituted through their material, metabolic, economic, and political bindings with the "open world". Ingold thus suggests we think about places (and cities) not as externally bounded objects – i.e. where the urban interfaces with an ostensibly non-urban environment, or where one political entity rubs against another – but as movement occurring along paths and lines, and turning around itself:

> "Places are formed through movement, when a movement *along* turns into a movement *around*... Such movement around is place-binding, but it is not place-bound. There could be no places were it not for the comings and goings of human beings and other organisms to and from them, from and to places elsewhere." (ibid, 1808).

Following this, we could think of built environments as places embodying an inherent tension: on one hand, they are entangled along pathways and lines (e.g. of transportation, communication, supply chains) with other places, near and far; on the other, humans keep setting up boundaries around them, to enclose them, to "harden" their surfaces and "occupy" them. This creates a "blockage" of entanglements, albeit one that is temporary, a futile attempt to put physical-infrastructural – but also political-symbolic – boundaries on bindings:

> "Under the rubric of the 'built environment', human industry has created an infrastructure of hard surfaces, fitted out with objects of all sorts… The blockage is only provisional, however. For wherever anything lives, the infrastructure of the occupied world is breaking up or wearing away, ceaselessly eroded by the disorderly groping of inhabitants, both human and nonhuman… (ibid, 1808-9).

Ingold's ecological notion of entanglement allows us to consider that any hard-edged separation, any blockage of interconnection, is only temporary. As human beings, just as non-human life forms, we are always entangled with everything, with other things and other beings – "we" are always entangled with "them". And so are our built environments, our towns and cities, which link and agglomerate into extended urban regions throughout the land. For Ingold, there is optimism in this view of ecological

and human interdependence: "…in an open world, the creeping entanglements of life will always and inevitably triumph over our attempts to box them in" (ibid, 1809).

3. Economic interdependence

Interdependence does not only have ecological foundations but also brings economic benefits. Wherever economic interdependence is in place (which is to say, every place) – from the earliest processes of the division of labor, through increased economic specialization, urban agglomeration economies, up to planet-spanning value chains – economic values increase, material gains and financial profits accrue, and political advantages ensue. Conversely, it doesn't require a Marxian analysis to attest that most of these benefits are divided and distributed in extremely unequal ways between people, places, and polities. Yet some advantages are more broadly dispersed. Prominent strands of historical research, political science, and political psychology have shown that where close economic interdependence exists between diverse ethnic groups or nation-states, there is a strong incentive to pursue or maintain peace – but only when some fundamental conditions are in place.

The idea that economic interdependence fosters peace originates from liberal theorists like Kant and later scholars in the institutionalist tradition. The premise is simple: economic ties increase the cost of conflict, foster mutual interests, and generate stakeholder groups that benefit from stability. Hence, when states or entities are economically connected, they are less likely to engage in conflict due to the high economic costs involved (Oneal et al., 1996; Oneal & Russett, 1999). However, Barbieri (1996) has critically and empirically questioned this notion, showing that while trade can reduce the likelihood of interstate war, it can also, under certain conditions, exacerbate conflict. Extreme interdependence, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, has the greatest potential for increasing the likelihood of conflict.

Shifting the lens to neighboring ethnic communities, Jha's (2013, 2018) historically rich research on interethnic trade networks provides evidence that violence can be deterred, or at least deferred, where interdependence between communities exists, even in devastating events such as the Partition of India in 1947. Using historical data from British colonial administrative records, Jah shows that towns with historically entrenched inter-ethnic trade between Hindus and Muslims were significantly less likely to experience large-scale violence during the Partition. Where economic ties were strong, individuals and communities had material incentives to preserve peace, fearing loss of livelihood and social capital. Multigenerational trade relationships between Hindu shopkeepers and Muslim weavers or transporters created mutual dependence. In cities like Amritsar and Lahore, where commercial networks were deeply interwoven, violence was delayed or averted, even as it raged nearby. Jha (2018) later extends the historical data into a formal model of how local economic ecosystems create informal

institutions that reinforce interethnic cooperation and raise the opportunity cost of violence. His work reorients conventional understanding of ethnic violence: it is not an inevitable result of substantive difference, but rather a contingent outcome shaped by economic institutions. His findings support the idea that economic ties can serve as informal peace infrastructure.

However, in protracted and asymmetric conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the empirical record on economic interdependence and peace remains unpersuasive. In his study of the "The Political Economy of Israeli–Palestinian Interdependence", Reuveny (1999) observed that while Israel and the Palestinian territories are economically intertwined, especially in labor and trade, the dependence is asymmetric: Palestinians rely heavily on access to the Israeli economy, an imbalance that allows Israel to use economic tools as political leverage. This asymmetry, already enshrined within with the Oslo agreements, has increased following their collapse. Mitrani and Press-Barnathan (2015), in their analysis of Israeli "*economic peace*" strategies promoted post-Oslo, emphasize that economic arrangements were not constructed to foster political equality or statehood, but to manage Palestinian behavior under occupation. Hence, they argue that in deeply unequal power relationships, economic interdependence may reinforce existing hierarchies instead of creating mutual gains.

Critically, then, interdependence must extend beyond economics to encompass also national identity and symbolic dimensions. Kelman (1999) emphasizes that peace in identity-based conflicts like Israel-Palestine cannot be achieved through economic means alone. He explores how national identities are mutually constructed in such conflicts and suggests that genuine interdependence – *emotional, political, and economic* – must be cultivated to resolve existential anxieties and build peace. Overall, the literature suggests that economic interdependence can contribute to peace – but in deeply asymmetric and identity-laden conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian case, economic links alone are insufficient. When interdependence is coercive or skewed, it reinforces hostilities. Peace through economic means is only viable when paired with political inclusion and reciprocal recognition.

4. Infrastructural interdependence: Nexus approaches

If economic interdependence is a necessary but insufficient component of sustainable peace; and when political antagonism and ethnic hatred are at such despairing levels – perhaps a more viable way to progressively build and sustain positive forms of interdependence passes through the infrastructures of everyday life? Infrastructure is a critical element for shaping the interrelations between conflicting communities and polities in either positive or negative, inclusive or exclusive, supportive or destructive ways. As sociotechnical systems and networks that supply our most basic needs

(especially water, energy, food), sustain everyday life, enable mobility, communication, and economic activities, and shape up city spaces, urban regions, national territories, and global connections – infrastructure should be seen as the foundation for a better shared future. At the very least, it could turn the abstract notion of interdependence into something more "down to earth", daily and familiar. As Berlant (2022) has shown, infrastructure constantly exposes us to the "inconvenience of other people" (with whom we are required to take a bus or suffer through a power outage) – but it can also become a "*commons*" that we share and lead to a new "common sense" of our inconvenient coexistence.

Traditionally, infrastructure systems have been planned, built, and managed separately from one another, siloed between different engineering disciplines, shaped according to technical constraints and political-economic exigencies. Moreover, the modern ideal of infrastructure as universal and equal provision of services, which emerged in the 19th up to mid-20th centuries, has been replaced over the last few decades by neoliberal forms of privatized, fragmented, and unequal infrastructures at the core of "*splintering urbanism*" (Graham & Marvin, 2001). With the simultaneous rise of ideas of sustainability, however, new "nexus" approaches have emerged. A "nexus" refers to the interconnected and interdependent relationships among key systems highlighting how changes or stresses in one system impact the others. The nexus framework emphasizes integrated resource management to ensure sustainability, resilience, and efficiency across sectors. These approaches emphasize the *"internal" interdependence* of different infrastructures – intervening in one system, such as water, inevitably impacts another, such as energy – as well as the *"external" interdependence* of these systems with a wide range of socioeconomic, environmental, and political dynamics, such as development, security, sustainability, peace, and climate change.

Beginning in the late 1980s and consolidating in the early 2000s, "nexus thinking" first addressed the Food–Energy–Water (FEW) nexus – three critical systems that must be at the core of any reconstruction effort and "sustainable development", be it in Gaza or anywhere. Over time, the nexus approach has expanded in both research and policy debates, and was applied to additional infrastructural systems, sectors, and industries. Significantly, the "*urban nexus*" concerns the specific attributes of urban "metabolic" processes, mediated via complex infrastructure networks into and out of cities (Newell et al., 2019; Monstadt & Coutard, 2019; Vogt et al., 2014). The nexus is further expanded to social domains (e.g. Health–Environment–Development), wider environmental and natural systems (e.g. Water–Food–Energy–Climate), and to political processes (e.g. Humanitarian–Development–Peace, Climate–Conflict).

To these different notions of the nexus, I suggest adding an explicitly political and proactive dimension: namely, that the interdependence of infrastructural systems to support environmental sustainability should also be purposely planned to promote

the *everyday interdependence of communities* in support of conflict resolution and peace. The change should be from the current situation of mostly separate and highly unequal infrastructures, where one powerful side can choose to disconnect, shut down, or destroy the "life-support systems" of the other – to a new situation where infrastructures are integrated across borders, sectors, regions, and territories; where gains in economy, efficiency, and sustainability would be so abundant, apparent, and mutually advantageous that anyone obstructing them would be proverbially "cutting off one's nose to spite one's face". Since infrastructure has an even more immediate and intimate effect on everyday life than (sometimes abstract) economic gains, the cost of conflict and interruption should be even clearer to both sides, hence contributing to a more symmetrical notion of interdependence. Moreover, a new common sense (if not exactly common identity) could gradually grow through such an *infrastructure-as-commons* approach, like the hugely diverse commuters of a large metro system who recognize their shared travails.

For example, in the context of the Gaza Region (including both the Palestinian Gaza Strip and the Israeli "Gaza Envelope") , interventions to develop and support cross-border infrastructural interdependence could range in scale and scope, focusing on the local nexus of infrastructural-environmental systems (FEW: Food, Energy, Water); the regional economic-ecological nexus (MORE: Mobility, Regional Economy & Ecology); and the global nexus of planetary boundaries, sustainable development goals, and peace-building (Plenty: Planetary Peace and Prosperity; see Marom, 2026). A wide range of concrete projects could be co-planned and co-produced to actively promote cross-border interdependence and introduce multiple co-benefits and strong incentives to avoid future disruption and violence. Cross-border interdependence would work even better if expanded into a wider regional context that includes Egypt, Jordan, the Gulf states, and beyond (e.g. the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor – IMEC).

5. Transitioning towards sustainable interdependence

As discussed so far, dependence can become interdependence when it is symmetrical, just, and sustainable. This is a continued process, perhaps never fully achieved, rather than a fixed objective or endgame. We must therefore think seriously about how to *transition* towards a long-term but ever-changing interdependence in the context of an entrenched and hugely harmful conflict. Here, the literature on sustainability transitions (STs) is instructive and rich with detail on how to understand and manage the transformation of unsustainable systems. Over the past twenty years, this rich body of knowledge on STs has emerged at the interface of science and policy with an emphasis on the transition to decarbonized socio-technical systems that address the climate crisis (Geels et al., 2017; Grin et al., 2010; Köhler et al., 2019). This approach

has also been influential in shaping and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

STs can change an existing *socio-technical system* by gradually reconfiguring its core elements – technologies, infrastructures, user practices, regulations, and cultural norms – to align with more sustainable goals. This often happens by nurturing innovations in protected spaces or "niches", challenging and gradually reshaping established "regimes", and utilizing external "landscape" pressures to create opportunities for change. This framework for analyzing interactions between niches, regimes, and landscape is known as the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP). *Niches* are protected environments where radical innovations can be nurtured away from the pressures of the mainstream market and societal norms. The *regime* encompasses the established and stable elements of a socio-technical system, including dominant technologies, infrastructures, markets, regulations, and social practices. These elements reinforce each other, leading to a state of path dependence where change is often incremental and slow. The *landscape* level represents the broader, exogenous environment that influences the socio-technical system. It includes long-term factors such as cultural values, environmental concerns (like climate change), economic fluctuations, and political shifts – including wars and international conflicts, which can often become the impetus for system change.

The ST/MLP framework emphasizes that transformations are not the result of isolated changes at one level but emerge from the dynamic interactions across all three levels. Moreover, major societal or technological changes (often stemming from the landscape) can create "windows of opportunity" where the established regime is vulnerable. During these periods, niche innovations have a higher chance of scaling up and contributing to systemic change.

While the ST framework has highlighted the role of technological innovation within different niches (scientific institutions, R&D, high tech industries, start-up accelerators, etc.), more recent studies have focused on the critical importance of *destabilization, decline, and phasing out* of unsustainable sociotechnical systems. However important it is to innovate, experiment, and implement new technologies and solutions, it is even more imperative to address the *unmaking and endings of existing systems* that have become obsolete or detrimental. The ST perspective can therefore be particularly valuable for an analysis of the post-war Gaza cross-border region, highlighting the interdependence between different infrastructures, actors, levels, and scales that shape the current extremely unsustainable sociotechnical system. Such an analysis will be a first step in realigning and coordinating different actors and processes, deliberately phasing out "incumbent" elements that create a "lock-in" in the current system and enhancing transformative elements at different scales to push towards a sustainable peace.

6. Concluding reflection: Interdependence in times of urbicide

I openly acknowledge that hoping for more interdependence between people and polities in the aftermath of a brutal war seems unreasonable and even reckless; that thinking about deploying the urban nexus in a situation of the wholesale destruction of cities in the Gaza Strip, of planned urbicide, might be preposterous; and that calling for "sustainability transitions" when 2 million were only recently on the verge of famine and still struggle to find clean drinking water, could be taken as a cruel joke. But the critical point I try to make in this lexical investigation is that this tragedy is the direct result of the combined forces of unequal dependence and extreme militarized separation. And that these, in turn, were brought about by the single-minded focus on unilateral independence by nationalists on both sides, as well as by well-meaning but wrong-headed people searching for peace through full separation.

And so, interdependence – economic and infrastructural, as discussed here, but also social, cultural, political – must be at the core of the solution, the foundation of a very long and determined transition towards peace within the shared homeland paradigm. As Dajani and Yehuda (2024) suggest, this paradigm, and more concretely, a two-state confederation framework, is required "for *managing the unavoidable interdependence of Israelis and Palestinians*, who—whether separated or not—must both live in a piece of territory only slightly larger than the state of Vermont." Perhaps a transitional phase would be required of interdependent but spatially divided polities. Yet hopefully, sooner rather than later, both people, Palestinians and Israelis, would start seeing also the benefits of their interdependence and would regain enough peace of mind to open up to each other – to arrive at *open, shared and interdependent* cities, regions, and states.

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