Digital Nomads: Between Homepages and Homelands

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Abstract
For the last 60 years, we Palestinians have been living in an ever-diminishing space, constantly losing our landscape and our land to Israeli occupation. We live in an unstable space; our places are not concrete enough no matter how much cement and steel we put in them. Our paths are uncertain, risky and dangerous. We are never sure that we can get to our destination, and if we do get there, we are never sure that we can get back to where we started. Drawing on theoretical notions developed by Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and Edward Said this paper examines how Palestinians can combat their loss of real physical space by resorting to new media and new technologies in the way of negotiating a sense of orientation in the world, and for constructing both personal and collective identities.

Keywords
Palestine; memory; space; virtual; internet; rhizome; occupation; dispossession; refugees

Introduction
Since 1947, with the founding of a homeland for Jews in Palestine, Palestinians have been living in an ever-diminishing space. This is a unique situation in the contemporary history of humanity; for 60 years, we have been subjugated to a situation where we constantly find ourselves in lesser geographies. My own personal life, like that of every other Palestinian, is a tale of perpetual loss of places. The place where I used to play when I was five had turned into a Jewish settlement by the time I was ten, suddenly becoming strange and forbidden. At ten years of age I could go to Jaffa or Gaza, but at 20

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I couldn't. At 30 I could go to Jerusalem; at 40 I couldn't., I was told not to love the refugee camp where I grew up and to never consider it home. The camp was transitory: something that appeared only to disappear – an abject landscape. I was born not in that landscape but in my parents’ memories of their former homeland. I grew up repeatedly hearing the same stories about the glorious past, the lost paradise, the gardens, the harvest and the horses they owned.

Jewish settlements are not only places for living comfortably and cheaply; they are projected as images endowed with Biblical qualities. They grow and transform more and more of their surrounding lands, imagined as the future and the fate of all the land. This invented geography is governed by a double temporality as W.J.T. Mitchell writes; “a similar double temporality governs the mythic image of the holy landscape. It is both the place of origin and the utopian prospect of the future, always fleeting beyond the present” (Mitchell 2000: 213).

From the perspective of the image above of an Israeli settlement (Fig.1), this process of transformation is irreversible; a process whereby geography is subjected to time, and space is re-invented as a time image, suppressing the