Re-inhabiting No-Man's Land:

genealogies, political life and critical agendas

Introduction

What is no-man's land? The answers to this question seem intuitively obvious, yet bewilderingly broad, ranging from the devastated land between the trenches of the Western Front to American urban ganglands and Caribbean tax havens. This tension between intuitive familiarity and simultaneous elusiveness is the starting point of this exploration. At its core, this is an effort to reinvigorate the critical power of the no-man's land as an analytical category that bears directly on the spatio-political realities of the present, from fracturing territorial integrity to biopolitical governance, materialities and the agency of those inhabiting these spaces – through residency, labour or mobility. Importantly, our focus is directed at the *social life* and *political possibility* harboured in spaces designated as the no-man's lands of the late 20th and early 21st century. This dual emphasis simultaneously challenges dominant yet limited juridico-political prisms of exclusion and abandonment, and presents alternative directions of inquiry that remain attentive to ecologies, social modalities and creative assertions of agency.

　　With nearly a millennium of European recorded history, a conceptualization on no-man's land cannot start *ex nihilo*, but neither can it confine its interest to the history of ideas. Rather than seek to solidify what Agnew (2014) recently (and critically) described as "static nominalism", the genealogies we draw on in the first section are conceptually generative; through them we are able to illuminate foundational dynamics that continue to resonate in contemporary instantiations. These genealogies are needed exactly because they provide the context through which no-man's lands are "invoked, redefined, circulated and thus help to create novel meaning that enter into social and political practice" (Agnew 2014, 314). Furthermore, this genealogical exploration is an attempt to understand not only how this concept emerges, but how it evolves

and indeed, how it loses its intellectual and political specificities. We thus challenge the unreflective use of no-man's land, "its naturalization and "routinization" into language" (Ophir 2011) and suggest substantive articulations through which it can regain intellectual and analytical rigour. Drawing on Foucault, this selective genealogy is undertaken in order to disturb present day conceptualizations, to productively engage a history of the present.

Asserting the critical relevance of no-man's land cannot be confined to genealogies, and in the following section we propose an initial framework for the identification and interrogation of no-man's lands. In our analysis, these spaces are a product of the simultaneous operation of abandonment and enclosure; each is discussed at length, closely following its spatial manifestations in a broad multidisciplinary corpus. It is this specific abandonment-enclosure dynamic that distils the specific quality of no-man's land, and distinguishes it from related concepts and functions. Nevertheless, our intention is not to essentialise no-man's land, or assume some conceptual purity. Rather, we aim to provide an initial analytical framework that still remains sensitive to no-man's land's heterogeneity, historical contingency and diverse impacts on social action and material realities.

In the penultimate section, we present three instances that highlight the significance of no-man's land in specific bio-political, socio-political and geo-political contexts. Our attention focuses on the subtle ways through which no-man's lands percolate into political lives and processes. Contrary the absence assumed in its name, we demonstrate that the no-man's land is a highly active space: it is constantly produced and transformed by a multitude of actors, and in turn, is itself a transformative and generative space, opening new horizons of political action and social interaction. Importantly, our discussion expands the conventional focus on the agency of state actors and explores the everyday production of no-man's lands, from place-based interventions of local residents to the nonhuman agency of ecologies and biota.

We conclude by setting out a future research agenda for the study of no-man's lands. This conclusion is far from definitive; rather, we aim to open a broader scholarly dialogue

inspired by and concerned with the specific dynamics and challenges of no-man's lands, past and present.

No-man's land: a selective genealogy

In Western cultural memory, 'no-man's land' immediately invokes the killing fields of the First World War. Disseminated and popularised through journalistic accounts from the Western Front, the no-man's land became known as the ultimate locus of physical and corporeal destruction. In an evocative description, Bernd Hüppauf highlights this material decomposition:

> A series of pictures taken over a long period of time shows regions of forests, which slowly begin to clear until only stumps of trees remain. Even those disappear under continuous bombardment, and finally, all that stays are a plane of black and dark tones of gray, rooted up ground without any contours, and mud interspersed with the remainders of combat-actions (quoted in Vismann 1997, 62).

The disintegrated space of and between the trenches made a deep mark on the intellectual landscape of the interwar period. In *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (The Battle as Inner Experience) (1922, 57), Ernst Jünger describes how the *Fronterlebnis* – life on the edges of no-man's land – dissolves the boundary between body and space, transforming the soldier into an integral part of a frontline ecology: "There, the individual is like a raging storm, the tossing sea and the rearing thunder. He has melted into everything". This is not a traumatic subjection of the body to mechanised war, but, as Jeffrey Herf (1984, 74–75) notes, an almost erotic rebirth and transfiguration of men into a new, improved community of the trenches that will lead the creation of "new forms filled with blood and power [that] will be packed with a hard fist". Rather than resort to nostalgia for a pastoral preindustrialised era, in the no-man's land Jünger discovers a landscape where body, machine and soil are fused to form "magnificent and merciless spectacles" (1922, 107).

Many accounts of life in No-man's Land bear no resemblance to the heroic rebirth Jünger portrays. A radically different critical trajectory, but one that nevertheless shares a close attention to the impact of the no-man's land on the intellectual and ethico-political landscape,

was famously presented by Walter Benjamin in his 1930 "Theories of German Fascism", which sought to scrutinise the political rationale behind Jünger's and other reactionary modernists' work, and its and impact on the latter years of the Weimar Republic (Herf 1984). In this essay, which reviews Jünger's edited collection *Krieg und Krieger* ("War and Warrior"), Benjamin rejects the culture of memory that emerged in the war's aftermath, and its tendency to romanticise and aestheticize the war's decomposed landscapes by incorporating them into the space of the nation through rituals of memory that boomed in the postwar years (Winter 1998). Benjamin's critique of the reactionary vision celebrated by revolutionary conservatives, returns to the very same landscape that haunts their writing, only to excavate a diametrically opposed intellectual-political imperative.

In another often cited essay, "The Storyteller", Benjamin returns once again to the devastated landscapes of the war as a turning point in the meaning of experience and remembrance (Jay 1996). Benjamin notes how the integrated, narratively meaningful variety of experience known as *Erfahrung* is unravelled by the war and its aftermath, leaving only the lived, fragmented experience or *Erlebnis*. This distinction, which is developed in Benjamin's oeuvre througout the 1930s, is importantly grounded in a highly humanistic depiction of the decomposed spaces of war:

> A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath those clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.

As these fragments show, for a generation of thinkers and artists working in the two decades following the war, No-man's Land remained a powerful referent, unmistakably situated in between the physical, political and intellectual trenches of the interwar era. Whether celebrated or condemned, the ruined landscape of no-man's land and the wounded lives of those who inhabited it never lost their historical, social and material concreteness. Its interpretations varied

widely, and the philosophical-political lessons extrapolated from it were equally diverse, but never did it lose its function as a genealogical zero point.

Despite its association with the geopolitical frontlines of the First World War, the notion of no-man's land has a much longer history that both indicates its richness as a qualitative spatial category and perhaps explains its idiomatic dissemination. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term first functioned as a toponym designating a piece of ground outside the north wall of London, which was used as a place of burial during the 14th century Black Death. This already alludes to the spatial conjuncture of liminality and death that have become a hallmark of no-man's lands more recently.

Even as a colloquial trope, the no-man's land seems to predate the First World War. In an address to the Royal Geographical Society in May 1864, the Scottish geologist Roderick Impey Murchison (1864, 250) described the areas surrounding the Nile south of Khartoum as "a sort of No-man's-land, in which numerous warring small tribes are kept in an excited and barbarous state by an extensive importation of firearms." Both the familiar colonial gesture that reduces land to a subhuman, "barbarous state" and its disputed status are noteworthy, highlighting the specific quality of the no-man's land as a space that already harbours forms of control, hierarchy and productive organisation. Moreover, in spite of the derogatory tone, Murchison describes a space that is anything but *terra nullius*;[1] instead, his no-man's land is already connected to a thriving arms trade and considered part of a larger imperial geopolitics. Mobility, networks and (geo)political agency will indeed be essential in our effort to reassess the no-man's land current critical importance. Yet equally significant is the reference to these lands as "a *sort* of No-man's-land", which suggests that a mid-19th century audience must have already been familiar with the term, at least to the degree of recognizing its metaphoric function.

Murchison uses the no-man's land to address a perceived territorial ungovernability. In the second half of the 20th and early 21st century, this has become one of the most common applications of the term. "No-man's land" offers an easily appropriated trope in the search for new vocabularies that account for spaces from which organised political power has been either intentionally withdrawn or significantly curtailed by adverse social-political or ecological-environmental circumstances. In cases including Afghanistan in the post-9/11 period (Simpson 2009), Clandestine Transnational Organizations in Southeast Asia (Hastings 2010) and the Sinai Peninsula after the 2011 popular revolt against Hosni Mubarak's regime (Hallyer 2013), "no-man's land" is applied to a wide range of spatial scales, political configurations and geopolitical dynamics. Whether the result of waning state sovereignty and its replacement by regional or international political, social and economic configurations (Sassen 1996; Moore 2003); the designation of "ungovernable territories" or the spatio-legal limbos of the 'war on terror' discourse (Gorelick, quoted in Mayer 2005, 108); or environments dominated by physical fortifications that seek to reassert control over flows of labour and terror (Brown 2010; Rosière and Jones 2012), "no-man's land" is commonly applied as a referent of spaces that feature disrupted orders of governance.

A similar use of the no-man's land is made in urban environments, echoing the early uses of the term. Once again, the applications range widely, from post-industrial urban landscapes (Kohn 2010), informal settlements on the city's fringe (Grant 2009; de Souza 2001) and underprivileged inner-city districts (Davis 1990), to more explicit geopolitical urban buffer zones (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Calame and Charlesworth 2012). The latter is of particular interest to the re-conceptualization of the no-man's land, as it provides important insights into the materiality of these spaces and their role in demarcating both physical perimeters and affective relations. Working in Kingston, Jamaica, Eyre identifies "'no-pass' points" that separate parts of the city with opposing political loyalties, each signposted by "a wrecked automobile, a pile of logs, a group of burned buildings, or a strip of waist-high grass in the middle of the roadway" (Eyre

1984, 24). Similarly intricate material ecologies are found in urban spaces explicitly designed as geopolitical no-man's lands. In Nicosia, Mostar and Jerusalem, the thick contours of buffer zones feature an urban typology of neglect, isolation (Bakshi 2012; Navaro-Yashin 2003) and localised efforts of regeneration that often exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the problems which persist in divided cities (Pullan et al. 2007; Pullan 2013b, 28–29; Calame and Pasic 2009). Following this dialectical interplay between governmentability and materiality will be central in our re-conceptualization of disrupted orders in and around the no-man's land.

An epistemological reversal occurs once material ecologies of no-man's lands are transplanted to non-human habitats. The material decay of man-made structures and infrastructures, as well as the imposed absence of human physical presence in these spaces are seen as an opportunity for the resuscitation of ecological biodiversity and the formation of highly isolated conservation areas. And rather than seek to abolish these zones of exclusion and see their re-inhabitation, concerted efforts are made to maintain their state of enforced depopulation. Nineteenth century expeditions to the western United States were among the first to associate "the common war ground visited only by war parties" as "a place of refuge" for game animals (William F Raynolds, quoted in Kay 1994, 38). The Demilitarized Zone between north and south Korea is often cited as a modern manifestation of this *war-zone refugium* effect (Dudley et al. 2002; Martin and Szuter 1999), noteworthy for offering a largely uninterrupted wildlife habitat. Though *war-zone refugia* advocates may seem far removed from critical urban scholars that seek practices and policies to rehabilitate and reintegrate no-man's lands into the lived fabric of human activity, both share a deeper perception of the no-man's land as a space that facilitates the return of a primordial state of nature, where normative, modern social order is suspended. Murchison's reference to the "barbarous state" of the no-man's land seems, once again, highly relevant.

Despite its rich interdisciplinary application, the no-man's land still lacks a methodical conceptual framework that would address its specific genealogies, intellectual import and

material characteristics. The gradual blurring or the site specificity and conceptual concreteness that typified references to the no-man's land in the 1920s and 30s can likely be traced back to the Second World War, a campaign that saw death transplanted from the killing fields between the trenches to the enclosed spaces of the camp, or carried out remotely through aerial killing. As a result, deeper reflections on the term's critical import have largely dissipated, turning it into a convenient figure of speech, but one that has largely lost its spatial or intellectual specificity. If no-man's land can be applied to anywhere – from offshore tax havens to inner-city ganglands – it has little use as a concrete analytical concept. Rather than dismiss the critical significance of no-man's land altogether, in what follows we propose some conceptual parameters that reassert analytical precision in the study of these spaces.

Rethinking no-man's land: toward a renewed critical framework

The operation of two forces produces the unique dynamics of no-man's land: abandonment and enclosure. There is no strict order to their appearance, which may be consequential, but more often is simultaneous and dialectical. The presence of both is critical in differentiating no-man's lands from other spaces: While sometimes sharing the liminal and transformative quality of borderlands or frontiers, the latter are not subject to the calculated abandonment we identify in no-man's lands. Nor are all no man's lands inherently marginal, with some sites situated at the heartland, as in decommissioned nuclear sites in western United States. Rather than provide an exhaustive review of each term, we aim to present the particular function of abandonment and enclosure in the production of no-man's lands and the dynamic of their co-operation.

Zone of abandonment
Abandonment has become a central concept in contemporary critical theory, primarily through its evolution in metaphysical philosophy and more recent critical interest in political theology. Viewed through a mostly Greco-Christian genealogy, abandonment is placed squarely within the

framework of the law. For Nancy, rather than simple exclusion "the origin of 'abandonment' is a putting at *bandon*," where

> *bandon* is an order, a prescription, a decree, a permission and the power that holds these freely at his disposal. To abandon is to remit, entrust, or turn over to such a sovereign power… the law of abandonment requires that the law be applied through its withdrawal… abandoned being finds itself deserted to the degree that it finds itself remitted, entrusted, or thrown to this law. (Nancy 1993, 43–44)

Nancy's conceptualisation of abandonment proved highly productive for the condition of exception developed by Georgio Agamben, for whom "the relation of exception is a relation of ban" (Agamben 1998, 28). Indeed, as Minca (2007) rightly points out, Agamben's formulates a fundamentally spatial relation of ambivalence and liminality between civil law and political fact, between juridical order and life. This particular geography of exclusion is defined by Agamben as a "no-man's-land" (2005, 10), though often interchangeable with a "zone of undecidability" and "threshold of indeterminacy". A rare reference in Agamben's oeuvre to a concrete articulation of no-man's land is found in his short discussion of the expulsion of 425 [*sic*] Palestinian men from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to southern Lebanon in the winter of 1992. At first sight, the reference to the no-man's land appears to be largely figurative, asserting that this space "in which they are refugees has already started from this very moment to act back onto the territory of the state of Israel by perforating it and altering it in such a way that the image of that snowy mountain has become more internal to it than any other region of Eretz Israel" (Agamben 2000, 24–5). There are important insights to be gained from this short reference, primarily about the threat that the banished, and the zone of abandonment pose to the imagined territorial and symbolic coherence of the nation-state, an issue we will return to later in this discussion.

However, the 1992 expulsion also provides important insights into more concrete temporalities and territorialities in which we identify the productive quality of the no-man's land, dimensions Agamben's theorisation seems to intentionally downplay: For fourteen hours the deportees sat blindfolded and handcuffed in busses while Israel's Supreme Court debated the legality of the order, which was eventually approved by a deeply divided court. Lebanon

immediately responded to Israel's act by deploying military forces to block access routes and prevent the deportees from leaving the border region. In a reversal of the function of one of Agamben's quintessential spaces, a tent camp set up by the deportees in the locked territory between the Israeli and Lebanese military forces became a focal point of political activity. Both Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards forged close relations with Palestinians in the camp, a relationship that proved critical in shaping the tactical abilities of Palestinian resistance groups in the 1990s and 2000s and launched some of the deportees into political leadership positions. The snowy mountainous camp attracted intense international media attention and diplomatic pressure eventually forced Israel to shorten the expulsion period. Geopolitics, mobility, political agency, temporality and even climate played significant role in shaping the no-man's land inhabited by the 415 Palestinians in southern Lebanon. Reviving these spatial, temporal and political contingencies, we would argue, is essential for any intellectually rigorous conceptualization of the no-man's land.

Rather than a purely juridico-political genealogy of abandonment, we harness the Jewish notion of *hefker* to direct our inquiry toward a more nuanced trajectory, one which remains open to different registers of social action and political subjectivity.[2] Through this, we point to the multiple vocabularies that can inform and expand our interpretative lens, to the different cultural sensitivities and political potentialities they foreground.

In the Hebrew, the term used to denote a no-man's land is *shatach hefker* (שטח הפקר), which literally translates as 'a zone of abandonment'. In Jewish jurisprudence, the category of abandonment (*hefker*) is related to a genealogical trajectory with particular social and affective contingencies that rarely feature in the political-theological scholarship that has invigorated critical interest in the term over the past two decades. One common use of the term regards the designation of ownerless property, its legal status and the processes through which it can be repossessed (Albeck and Elon 2007; Cohen 1966). The religious-jurisprudential debates of the term range widely, but share an underlying concern with the social ordering of the material

world, or more precisely, with spaces and objects that disrupt normative categories of ownership, possession, protection and tenure. After the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70AD, organised sacrifice was no longer available as an expression of religious dedication. Shortly after, acts of individual, deliberate abandonment – of land, property or goods – begin to appear. In the absence of Jewish political sovereignty, the wilful ceding of ownership rights and their designation as divine property becomes a radical act that redrew the boundary between terrestrial and divine space. The anarchic dimension of this form of abandonment was not lost on the Jewish and Roman elites. Both understood how it potentially evades religious hierarchies and subverts legal frameworks of ownership, tenure and therefore taxation (Urbach 1979).

The allusion to *hefker* also appears in more intimate realms of gender, affect and kinship, designating protections for children or women in cases of marriage and death. In an important Talmudic debate, for example, the notion of *hefker* is applied to the right of an under-aged orphan girl to refuse marriage (Cohen 1966). This debate directly grapples with the legal and social protections vulnerable individuals are entitled to by the court and the community. Yet another application defines the powers held by the Rabbinical Jewish court (*Beit Din*) to inflict quasi-criminal sanctions (confiscation, expropriation and forfeiture of property), even when such acts directly contravene stipulations set out in the *Torah*, the urtext of the Jewish legal order (Elon and Kaplan 2007; Kirschenbaum and Trafimow 1990). Material economies, social responsibilities and jurisprudential heirarchy feature here as forces that re-animate no-man's lands as critical spaces for the living, rather than the liminal spaces for the dead or the dying. The potential for more nuanced interpretations of abandonment is not confined to Jewish genealogies.

In fourteenth century England, the typical use of abandonment stressed its material and practical applications to property and insurance law, particularly with relation to the severing of traditional kinship relations as a result of new land-tenure arrangements and enclosure policies

(Salerno 2003). João Biehl's study of the increasing prevalence of urban places that house the social outcasts of contemporary Brazil points to a more recent manifestation of social abandonment. Biehl refers to such places as "zones of social abandonment" (2005, 2), that is, places that lack medical and governmental attention and are ultimately treated as "dump" sites for the ill, the impoverished, the mentally challenged, the jobless, and the homeless. Social abandonment can be located in other scales as well, from dementia sufferers in American streets and the domestic spaces in India (Marrow and Luhrmann 2012) to the negligence and criminalization experienced by communities in India-Bangladesh border enclaves (Shewly 2013), where social abandonment appears as a bio-, socio- and geo-political product.

While the dynamic exposed in this corpus significantly expands the narrow juridico-political prism, the reassertion of the no-man's land as a critical analytical category requires an even further expansion of the active political dynamics in the no-man's land. Following Peteet (2011) we argue that abandonment must be constantly monitored, patrolled, and maintained, often by force, because those inhabiting these spaces are not quiescent. Zones of abandonment are constantly produced through intense discursive labour and the investment of physical means. Simultaneously, abandonment as a constitutive dimension of no-man's lands produces new forms of political subjectivities and sources of mobilization, as we have identified in the Palestinian deportees' tent camp, and as others find among South African health activists (Comaroff 2007) or in the articulations of communal bonds in India-Bangladesh border enclaves (Cons 2012). Building on Marx and Foucault, Jane Comaroff (2007, 26–27) speaks of the prolific productiveness of abandonment, and the ways it has given rise to new forms of sociality and signification. To reassert the critical analytical capacity of the no-man's land, much greater attention will have to be directed at such productive articulations.

Enclosure space
If acts of sovereign abandonment result in a radical devaluation of human life and socio-political agency, the withdrawal of sovereign presence is asserted and enforced through particular

materializations and assemblages of enclosure (Jeffrey, McFarlane, and Vasudevan 2012). This dialectical operation of calculated withdrawal of power and its reterritorialization through enclosure is, we argue, an essential hallmark of no-man's land. Within this formulation, our use of enclosure is intentional, drawing critical attention to the function of no-man's land within a spatial economy that produces, manipulates and reconfigures the understanding of value.

This de- and re-valuation is evident in the very first recorded appearance of the term in English, referring to a lot purchased in 1348 by Ralph Stratforde Bishop of London, north of the London Wall. Just before the plague hit London, the lot was "inclosed with a wall of Bricke" and used as an emergency burial ground for victims of the Black Death. In *Divine Violence*, Ophir (2013) notes that catastrophe in the 14th century was the ultimate realm of divine intervention. Hence, perhaps, *no-man's* land. Yet the enclosure of this place was a premeditated act of preparation by the London authorities. The demarcation and enclosure of this burial ground as a calculated anticipatory spatial technology, points to an early effort of earthly governance of disaster, its management and bio-political spatialisation – long before the secularisation of catastrophe in the 18th century, meticulously analysed in Ophir's work, and familiar to most scholars through Foucault's corpus. This early case illustrates the fine balance between the chaos of catastrophe, a space ceded to divine rule, and rationalized re-ordering manifested in the act of enclosure.

Beyond these historical roots, our use of enclosure as a central characteristic of no-man's land draws inspiration from recent critical interventions that sought to rethink its import for a diverse set of political configurations. Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevan have pointed out the critical significance of enclosures for our understanding of contemporary neoliberalism and its materialities of dispossession, displacement and discipline (2008; see also Jeffrey, McFarlane, and Vasudevan 2012; Retort 2005). Significantly, this moves beyond traditional understandings of enclosure as the transformation of commonable lands into privately owned hands, and the related curtailment of common rights to land and resources (Blomley 2007). Recognizing the

heterogeneous production of geoeconomic, geopolitical and biopolitical enclosure, as well as their overlapping sites in the colonial present, enables us to think through the assemblages of no-man's land in relation to economies of violence, habitation and rights, without confining our investigation to a strict vocabulary of land tenure, debt, labour, and capital. At the same time, this critical effort to rethink space enclosure enables us to consider no-man's lands not only as expressions of aggrandized statist and para-statist violence, but also as important sites in the "messy, practical, and highly conflicted reclaiming of the 'commons'" (Vasudevan, McFarlane, and Jeffrey 2008, 1642).

In their most explicit manifestations, no-man's lands appear as relatively unsophisticated spaces of enclosure. On the face of it, the fortification technologies they feature serve the most basic functions through which a "resurgent sovereignty can rear its anachronistic head" (Butler 2004, 94). Yet as Brown (2010) points out, the proliferation of walls is in fact an anxious performance of sovereign power curtailed by processes of global capital and god-sanctioned violence. We identify similar ambiguities in the enclosures of no-man's lands: the blunt presence of fortifications and barricading enables what Spanos (2009, 309) calls a "regime of deterritorializing territorialisation". This "apparatus of capture" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004) radically alters established systems of value, first those relating to the inhabitants of spaces condemned as no-man's land, who are, as we explore at length above, abandoned; simultaneously, the targeted land becomes a wilderness, an unproductive space to be objectified, enclosed and gridded. This radical devaluation entails immense investment in physical and discursive infrastructures of enclosures, which, in turn, imbues the devalued space with new signification. It is at this stage that enclosed no-man's lands begin to "act back", reterritorialized either through physical occupation or, more often, symbolically territorialized into imagined geographies of enmity, national revival or promised plenitude. Thus the mayor of the South Korean city of Paju can reclaim the Demilitarized Zone as "a land with abundant ecological resources and a landmark for world peace", while Nicosia's no-man's is perceived as a protective

buffer for Turkish Cypriots and a reminder of foreign occupation for the Greek population of the island (Alpar Atun and Doratli 2009).

Yet the spatio-political dynamics we identify in enclosures of no-man's land seem to diverge from modalities of capitalist accumulation-by-dispossession in the imperial and colonial present (Harvey 2009; Gregory 2004; Coward 2005). As empirical studies of no-man's lands demonstrate, efforts to reterritorialize these spaces through the removal of physical enclosures produce new spatial realities that resemble neither the fortified spaces of militarized enclosure nor a rehabilitated commons. In Jerusalem's no-man's land, for example, the imposing walls and wide stretches of barbed wire that divided the Israeli- and Jordanian-controlled parts of the city were removed after the occupation of East Jerusalem by Israel in 1967. But the eradication of enclosures proved far more difficult: infrastructural projects like a multi-lane highway and the more recent light-rail line that sought to normalize and blur the thick presence of the no-man's land between Arab and Jewish parts of the city, only accentuated the division by imposing restricting mobility regimes (Pullan 2013a). In Mostar, post-war reconstruction has eluded the Bulevar Narodne Revolucije, a main artery of pre-war life in the city, which constituted the buffer zone during the 1992-1995 conflict years (Calame and Pasic 2009, 15). The damage caused to residential buildings along the Bulevar has yet to be fully repaired and residents are slow to return. The persistent dilapidation and its de facto buffering function is, according to Pullan (2013b, 27), directly related to the incomplete rehabilitation of the Bulevar. These examples illustrate how powerful practices of urban planning that play a significant role in the production of enclosures seem to struggle to overcome the legacy or quality no-man's lands leave long after their official abolishment. Once established, no-man's lands prove hard to remove.

Thinking through this resilient quality, we draw on Crockett's (2010) reading of the notions of eclosure and *déclosion*. Applying Deleuze and Guattari's terminology to the political-theological critique of Jean Luc Nancy, Crockett suggests that "Eclosure is the deterritorialization that allows for the reterritorialization, or enclosure of space. But *déclosion* or

dis-enclosure is an absolute deterritorialization that cannot be reterritorialized" (in Malabou 2010, xxiv). Crockett's observations in the forward to a book by the French philosopher Catherine Malabou, are deeply rooted in post-deconstruction metaphysics of subjectivity and ontology, which makes their application to more topological realms of enclosure challenging at the very least. We are especially wary of any designation of absolute categorizations to what are inherently lived, dynamic and highly contingent spaces. However, understanding *déclosion* and eclosure as the extreme ends on a spectrum rather than absolute positions enables a more spatially nuanced understanding of no-man's land as a particular spatial *quality* that refuses and frustrates acts of reterritorialization, but also proves much harder to contain within strictly enclosed zones. In the following we explore the actualization of this quality in three cases, and its percolation into the analysis of biopolitics, urban activism and contemporary forms of governmentality.

Re-activating no-man's land

In outlining the genealogies and analytical framework through which no-man's lands can regain critical rigour, we repeatedly refer to a particular "quality" of these spaces. In one instance, we point to the modalities of control, hierarchies and productive structures that complicate an easy association of no-man's lands with *terra nullius*. In another, this quality is referred to as a disruptive resilience, the endurance of no-man's lands through an assemblage of material, spatial and affective orders. Our use of "quality" is deliberate, and directs the investigation toward a political praxis of no-man's lands that is not strictly confined or reducible to narrow utilitarian functions. In so doing, we seek to identify particular characteristics and dynamics that set no-man's lands apart from other spaces with which they are all too often conflated, namely, buffer zones, sites of urban dereliction or regions deemed ungovernable. Whilst no-man's lands may certainly serve these functions or possess these characteristics, our concern turns to more subtle ways through which these spaces percolate into political lives and processes. We explore this

through three figures that embody different facets of no-man's land quality, each from its distinct historical and political position: survivors of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the Israeli Black Panther Movement and the Palestinians expelled by Israel in 1992 into southern Lebanon. Considering the appearance of this quality *inside* the no-man's land, on its thick *margins*, as well as far *beyond* its immediate environs, we suggest a qualitative topology through which no-man's land gains its social and political significance.

"The Chernobyl Nuclear Plant Zone of Alienation" (Зона відчуження Чорнобильської AEC), commonly known in English as the 'Exclusion Zone', was drawn around the damaged nuclear reactor in Chernobyl by the USSR military shortly after the 1986 explosion, and designates a restricted area of 2,600 km^2. More than five million people live in areas of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine that are classified as 'contaminated' with radionuclides due to the Chernobyl accident. Among them, about 400,000 people lived in more contaminated areas – classified by Soviet authorities as areas of strict radiation control. Of this population, 116,000 people were evacuated in the spring and summer of 1986 from the "the exclusion zone and the zone of absolute (mandatory) resettlement" to non-contaminated areas. Another 220,000 people were relocated in subsequent years (Chernobyl Forum 2003). Yet the current configuration of the Exclusion Zone was preceded by a series of targeted actions, all part of an escalating, multi-scalar dynamic of enclosure: Less than three hours after the initial explosion in Reactor 4, a disaster headquarters was set up and roadblocks were erected to prioritize emergency responders. Simultaneously, residents were warned to remain indoors. Soon after, more severe measures were added to these initial delineations of risk-space, constituting a months-long containment effort often referred to as the 'liquidation'. Helicopter pilots dropped sand, clay and lead to seal the reactor's core, soldiers were tasked with removing graphite debris from roofs and a team of Russian miners filled an excavated void under the reactor room with concrete to prevent it from burning into the underground water system (Mould 2000; Onishi, Voitsekovich, and Zheleznyak 2007). This volumetric effort later included damming of water sources, a technological

infrastructure for the monitoring of radiation, sanitary posts for the decontamination of workers' clothing as well as more conventional use of fences, barbed wire, barricades and checkpoints.

We find the use of "alienation" in the official title highly appropriate, pointing attention to less visible ruptures in the life fabric of individuals and communities medically and economically affected by the event. In a detailed study of Chernobyl's impact on Ukrainian forms of citizenship, Petryna (2004) illustrates how "exposure", the quintessential condition of the homo sacer's absolute vulnerability to violence and death, is made into a resource, into social protections, forms of citizenship and informal economies of healthcare and entitlement. Parallel to these subtle reconstitutions of political agency, Petryna notes that the "deep intrusion of illness onto personal lives fostered a type of violence that went beyond the line of what could be policed" (2002, 216). Both the persistent damage (to bodies, ecologies and atmospheres) and its articulation as political capital are never fully confined to the strict enclosures imposed in and around the zones of exclusion. Yet this qualitative migration of (bio)political capital carried in the ill and wounded body of the survivor also produces new enclosures. The wife of one of the first-responders who was exposed to extreme levels of radiation described the bio-chamber in which he was placed during his hospitalization in Moscow, and the extensive quarantine measures that isolated the man from the medical staff. To complete his dehumanisation, one nurse referred to the dying man as "a radioactive object with a strong density of poisoning.[...] That's not a person anymore, that's a nuclear reactor" (Alexievich 2006, 16–17). The radical unmaking of the human body to the extent that it is no longer distinguished from the original space of disaster, echoes the violent dissolution of distinctions between body and space in the no-man's land of the First World War we note at the opening of this paper. Yet both this devaluation of human subjectivity and the revaluation of political agencies emerge out of a similar qualitative excess of no-man's land, the inability to fully contain its effects through the deliberate acts of its production, namely, abandonment and enclosure.

The political excess of no-man's land is made even more explicit in the emergence of the Israeli Black Panther Movement in 1971. This case shifts the focus from the degradation of the human body to the function of no-man's land as a socio-political catalyst. Four decades after its dissolution, the movement is still considered to be one of the most radical challenges to the ethnic, socioeconomic and political hegemony that dominated Israel in the first three decades of its existence. Traditional chronicles of the Black Panthers focus on the growing frustration among Jews from Arab and North-African descent at their disenfranchisement and marginalisation by the country's Jewish-European elites (Chetrit 2009; Shenhav 2006). Less attention is given to the fact that its core group originated from the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Musrara, which until 1967 stood in the shadow of the no-man's land that divided the city. In an interview, one of the founding members of the Black Panthers, Reuvel Abergel, recounted his childhood on the cusp of no-man's land, with "sand bags in every corner and the looming presence of the Jordanian Legion a stone-throw away" (Abergel 2011). Yet Abergel also noted instances that transgressed the barricaded divide: a football mistakenly kicked to the Jordanian side of the no-man's land was promptly kicked back; fluent in Arabic, Jewish children in Musrara developed "shouting relationships" with Arab children that remained invisible until the formal removal of the no-man's land in 1967.

The occupation of East Jerusalem radically transformed Middle East geopolitics, but also had direct impact on the immediate socioeconomic and political landscapes in the city. Almost overnight, neighbourhoods that until then lay at the urban frontier, became the heart of the newly "unified" city. As land values soared in the new inner city, neighbourhoods adjacent to the 1949 cease-fire line just west of the Old City became the target of mass evictions, gentrification and redevelopment projects (Gonen 2002; Hasson 1993).

The removal of the no-man's land not only opened new spaces for capitalist creative destruction, but also opened – quite literally – new horizons, socially and politically: Abergel (2009) recalls that while the war was still raging, he crossed the fences and met up with

Palestinian friends he made during the many years of sharing a mutual position in "the shadow of no-man's land". Soon, young men from Musrara used their contacts in East Jerusalem to sell hashish to university students and tourists. These ventures later developed into joint watermelon stands that were built in the former no-man's land, ramshackle sheds where every evening Arab-Jews and Palestinians played music and drank together. The encounters with youth leaders and left-wing groups also exposed the Musrara group to the radical political thinking of the late 1960 and early 70s, to ideas of Black Power and the civil rights movement in the United States (Chetrit 2009). This proved critical to the shaping of the Israeli Black Panthers' rhetoric, political agenda and even their visual symbols- the movement adopted the clenched fist of the Black Power salute as its official banner. In most chronicles, the movement's "birth" is dated 3 March 1971, the day of its first protest event in Jerusalem's City Hall square. Yet we posit that the thick margins of no-man's land, rather than the city square, is where one would find the ideological, social and experiential roots of this radical political movement.

The political quality emerging from the case of the Black Panthers refuses easy conceptual categorization. What we describe as a "thick margin" that surrounds no-man's land embodies always more than can be conveyed, for example, through established taxonomies of marginality (Mehretu, Pigozzi, and Sommers 2000; Wacquant 2008). Despite their importance in illuminating dynamics of socioeconomic and spatial inequalities, the intricate assemblages that determined the political identity of the struggles in and around the no-man's land are not reducible solely to the structural biases of market forces. Put differently, the watermelon sheds in the former no-man's land are not reducible to a counter-hegemonic space of economic redistribution. After all, Abergel's recollection highlights the Arabic music played every night in that space, and the cultural bond of Arab-Jews and Palestinians around it. The fusion of ethnonational, cultural, socioeconomic and geopolitical forces makes the interrogation of no-man's lands an extremely complex conceptual and analytical challenge. In the case of the Israeli

Black Panthers, it is also what enabled the political agency that emerged from the no-man's land to be so effective and threatening.

We previously noted how the deportation of the 415 Palestinians into southern Lebanon in 1992 formulated a no-man's land that harboured a rich set of political interactions and geopolitical linkages. This case also illuminates deeper paradigms of governance that situate the analysis of no-man's land in the context of contemporary debates of late modern governmentality.[4] Our starting point seems prosaic at first: As part of the deportation, Israeli military forces based in the region were ordered to monitor the deportees' camp from a distant perimeter; in military jargon, the space within this perimeter was defined as a "containment space" (Weiss 2014). This military inversion of psychotherapeutic terminology encapsulates the dynamic of abandonment and enclosure we have followed throughout this paper. The deportees were left to their own devices, to seek help from UN organizations or refuge in Lebanon, but the contours of this space were strictly enforced. To be sure, Israel did not relinquish its de facto sovereign status, exercising both border setting and monopolized violence. But in this space, the traditional function of gevernmentality, which includes both a managerial system of circulation in space and pastoral care for populations (Foucault 2009), is severed. Through its particular dynamic of abandonment and enclosure, the no-man's land strips governmentality of its pastoral function and leaves it as a mechanism of extreme utilitarian control.

In the two decades that followed the deportation, "containment" became emblematic of more sophisticated systems of Israeli governance over the occupied Palestinian populations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The 1993 Oslo Accords enabled Israel to gradually abdicate its responsibility for the Palestinian population, while setting up a restricting regime of movement which confined Palestinian life to strict enclaves governed by the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Amir 2013; Azoulay and Ophir 2013). Replicating the particular dynamic of governmentality featured in the southern Lebanese no-man's land, Israel's policy disjoined *management* of life from *responsibility* for it (Amir 2013, 229). By replacing permanent military presence in population

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centres with a control of enclave perimeters, Israel maintains ultimate control over all Palestinian realms of life, while placing the onus of care for the population on the governing apparatuses of the PA. The quasi-sovereign presence of the PA is also what sets the South Lebanon case from the realities of the West Bank: The crude form of state-orchestrated abandonment in 1992 was partly responsible for attracting international public attention and pressured Israeli policymakers to reverse the decision. Contemporary evocations of Palestinian sovereignty deflect such pressures and enable the perseverance of the geopolitical status quo.

What is proposed here is not simply the application of "no-man's land" as a convenient label to all Palestinian territories or even to the enclaves featuring this particular dynamic of governmentality. Rather, we highlighted the analytical potential of interrogating the precise configurations of power formulated in no-man's lands, their evolution and adaptation to changing spatial and political circumstances. Once again, no-man's land is understood as a particular quality that can be adopted to and transplanted into very different settings: from its appearance in the space of the individual body of the Chernobyl survivor, the ways it shaped collective agency in the Black Panther Movement, to its morphed appearance in spaces of contemporary governmentality in the Palestinian West Bank. Each case entails very different scales of analysis, distinct positions of political actors and movements into, out of or on the thick margins of the no-man's land.

These differences highlight the fluidity of this concept and the difficulty defining its end-points. As a principle, we return to the fundamental spatial condition of abandonment and enclosure found in all no-man's lands discussed here. Whether located in the small space of the body, locked between borders or consecrated at the edge of the plagued city, no-man's lands are always a product of the abandonment-enclosure tension. This tension is also what determines the productive political qualities of no-man's lands, and their ongoing impact on the specific operations of power.

No-man's land: toward a critical agenda

True to a tradition of Socratic inquiry, this article set out to answer the very basic question "What is no-man's land?". By positing this question, we sought to problematize the taken for granted status of no-man's land and its proliferation as a convenient colloquialism that is applied to a vast set of spaces, material conditions and socio-political circumstances. By its very nature, the act of definition is also an act of delimitation, the designation not only of what a concept is, but what it is not. This task proved especially important in outlining the conceptual pillars of no-man's land, the conditions that produce this space and the qualitative dynamic that sets it apart from other sites and functions.

The analytical foundations we lay here are not definitive, but are intended to open up future research avenues that will further explore the conceptual, empirical and methodological challenges of no-man's lands. As we have shown, these directly address key questions in contemporary political and cultural geography, but are also of concern to a broader scholarly community in the humanities and social sciences. Based on our analysis, three trajectories stand out in particular.

First, from its earliest manifestations to its appearances throughout the 20th century, no-man's lands entail a direct, and often violent encounter of the human body with the materialities of the earth. This ties the study of no-man's lands to recent scholarship highlighting the haptic and somatic geographies of the battlefield, and the corporeal enmeshment of the body within the geopolitics of war and empire. Gregory's (In press) notion of "corpography" and Pugliese's (2013) "geocorpographies" develop this interrogation in both modern and late-modern spaces of war. The work of feminist political geographers on the everyday and seemingly apolitical sites of civilian security (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Fluri 2011), importantly direct our attention to the gendered elements and corporeal scales through which no-man's land—itself a deeply gendered term—functions and can be acted open. As we have seen in the plagued bodies of Medieval London or the wounded bodies of Chernobyl, the particular corpography of the no-man's land

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extends beyond the realms of war and violent conflict, and invites important exploration of political theology, affective and ethical regimes or the biopolitical experiences of citizenship, all dimensions we point to in our analysis, but which deserve further and more focused research.

Second, and related to this, greater attention ought to be given to the political and geopolitical configurations that facilitate the formation of no-man's lands. Again, the analytical scope should not solely view no-man's lands as a by-product of warfare and geopolitical bordering processes. Rather, the study of no-man's lands can make important links to more profound dynamics of late modern governmentality, harnessing the particular relation of abandonment and enclosure to the constitution of new conditions of sovereign rule, technologies of the self and pastoral power. At the same time, no-man's lands are generative spaces for political agency, enabling explicit acts of resistance like those of the Black Panthers discussed at length here, but also more subtle forms of social interaction and cultural production, for example in the work of the Home for Cooperation, an NGO situated in Nicosia's Buffer Zone that facilitates different forms of transformative knowledge. This diversity of agency and forms of action are one of the most overlooked dimensions of no-man's land, but also, we would suggest, where its radical potential rests.

Finally, the nonhuman dimensions of no-man's lands merit further consideration. Despite its almost-clichéd reproduction, the visual vocabulary of post-industrial ecologies and post-catastrophic dereliction is significant, because it entails sentiments, fears and desires that are projected onto the seemingly vacant spaces of no-man's lands. The political use of recovered biota in zones of abandoned enclosure as a parable of peaceful and reconciled futures is one example. The genealogies and practices of no-man's land can further this exploration. How, for example, do 19th century 'war-zone refugia' continue to resonate in more recent designations of former American military sites like the Rocky Mountain Arsenal as wildlife refuge? Such fantasies of "re-wilded" biosystems that allow the undisturbed recovery of flora and fauna are inherent to the cultural imagination and political discourses of no-man's land. Further linking no-man's lands

research to recent interdisciplinary work on military environmentalism is one possible orientation of future analysis; considering creative interventions and documentations, in another. We are reminded, for example, of the Chernobyl illustrations of Swiss visual artist Cornelia Hesse-Honegger, which expose minute, yet irreparable fauna deformations and more broadly document the slow violence (Nixon 2011) that persists in no-man's lands.

As we conclude this article, the Israeli security cabinet is gathered to consider the deportation of dozens of Hamas operatives from the West Bank following the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers (Ahren 2014). Twenty-two years after the previous retaliatory expulsion, Gaza, rather than southern Lebanon, is the proposed destination of the deportees. Once again, closed-doors legal debates precede the political discussions, tactical plans are drawn and media reports cover – albeit sparsely – the international wrangling around the proposal and its justifications. Whether the deportation goes ahead or not, a no-man's land has just taken form: enclosed by a volumetric control matrix after Israel's 2005 "Disengagement", the Gaza Strip is now considered, openly, as a site of penal abandonment. A reminder, if one was needed, of the merits and urgencies of critically re-inhabiting no-man's land.

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[1] This is not to say that *terra nullius* is altogether divorced from the dynamic of no-man's land identified here. As a specific strategy of settler colonialism the legal designation of *terra nullius* enabled revocation of land rights and denial of indigenous territorial ownership (Mercer 1993). The dynamic of no-man's land does not directly involve the invalidation of rights but rather constitutes a tactical withdrawal of power from a given space. As such, it presents the opposite territorial dynamic from the dispossession imposed through the declarative acts of *terra nullius*.

[2] There is a distinction between Agamben's use of abandonment, which is applied directly to life, and abandonment in the sense of *hefker*, which applies to objects and material property. Yet we repeatedly point to the dissolution of the boundaries between life and object, either in the violent corpography of war (Gregory In press)(Gregory In press) or in the social-religious designation of certain individuals as mere property. The Talmudic discussion of *hefker* in the context of slave killing is one example (see: Cohen 1966, 21).(see: Cohen 1966, 21). We are thankful to Adi Ophir for prompting this question.

[4] Our focus on governmentality emerges from the specific power configuration of late colonial occupation, which exceeds the conceptual confines of sovereign or disciplinary control. Future research will need to address more directly these related forms of power and their relation to no-man's lands.

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