Planning through Misinformation

Colonial Power, Food Systems, & Spatial Inequality

A Comparative Analysis of Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison



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Abstract

This dissertation examines how misinformation functions as a structural feature of spatial governance within urban planning systems. Through a comparative analysis of Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison, the study demonstrates how narrative framing translates historically produced inequalities into administratively rational planning outcomes. The cases examined in this thesis operate within fundamentally different institutional environments: Hebron under militarized occupation and fragmented sovereignty; Cape Town shaped by the spatial legacy of apartheid within a contemporary neoliberal governance framework; and Madison embedded in a liberal democratic planning system structured by settler-colonial land dispossession. These contexts are not interchangeable, yet together they reveal how planning institutions stabilize territorial authority by reframing political conditions such as technical, environmental, or procedural matters.

Across these cases, misinformation does not appear primarily as digital disinformation or factual error. Instead, it emerges through institutional narratives; security discourse, developmental rhetoric, and sustainability framing; that normalize structural asymmetries in land access, mobility, and infrastructural control. Food systems provide a particularly effective analytical lens for tracing these dynamics because they depend directly on land tenure, water allocation, transportation networks, and regulatory authority. As planning institutions restructure territorial governance, food systems are among the first sectors to reflect shifts in sovereignty, recognition, and infrastructural power.

The dissertation extends this analysis to planning futures under conditions of constrained sovereignty, with particular attention to reconstruction in Palestine, including Gaza. In such contexts, reconstruction discourse may normalize dependency by presenting externally imposed constraints such as logistical coordination or humanitarian necessity. A fourth narrative logic; dependency normalization; emerges, transforming structural limitation into administrative common sense. As planning increasingly relies on algorithmic decision systems, predictive modeling, and data-driven governance tools, these narrative logics risk becoming embedded within technical infrastructures themselves. Algorithmic systems trained on donor-driven metrics and stabilization frameworks may encode political constraints as fixed parameters, thereby transforming inequality into computational normality.

By conceptualizing misinformation as a mode of spatial governance, this dissertation contributes to planning theory, critical urban studies, and misinformation research. It demonstrates that planning is not only a material practice but also an epistemic one, shaping the interpretive frameworks through which territorial arrangements are understood and legitimized. The findings underscore the need for decolonial and misinformation-resistant planning frameworks that foreground sovereignty, structural asymmetry, and epistemic inclusion. Ultimately, the dissertation clarifies the stakes of planning in contexts where sovereignty is contested or constrained: whether planning will cultivate territorial autonomy or stabilize structural dependency through administrative rationality.

Dedication

This work begins in exile,

is carried by memory,

sustained by family,

and is bound together by الوطن—

the living thread between those who came before me

and those who will come after.

In memory of my father,

whose strengths and values continue to guide my path.

Across generations and across distance,

memory becomes a responsibility.

With faith, with resolve,

and with the unwavering belief

that land and justice are inseparable,

I begin.

Acknowledgments

This thesis was not written in isolation. It was shaped by the guidance, generosity, and support of many people whose influence has accompanied me throughout this journey.

I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to my professors and mentors in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Your intellectual guidance, thoughtful critique, and commitment to ethical scholarship profoundly shaped how I think about cities, land, and justice. Through your teaching, I learned that planning is not simply about policy or design, but about understanding the complex relationships between power, place, and people. Your encouragement gave me the confidence to pursue a research topic that required both academic rigor and personal conviction.

I am also grateful to my colleagues and friends whose conversations, encouragement, and solidarity made the challenges of graduate study more meaningful and less solitary. In moments of uncertainty, your support reminded me that scholarship grows through dialogue and shared curiosity.

To my mother and my siblings, thank you for your love, patience, and unwavering belief in me. Even across distance, your prayers and encouragement have always been a source of strength. You reminded me that no matter how far I traveled in pursuit of knowledge, the foundation of who I am remains rooted in family.

I also remember my father with deep gratitude. From him I learned resilience, dignity, and the importance of standing firmly for what is right. Although he is no longer here to witness this milestone, his values, strength, and belief in the importance of education continue to guide me. The lessons he instilled in me about perseverance, dignity, and responsibility remain present in every step of this journey.

To my children, you are the quiet reason behind every step of this journey. My hope is that this work will one day remind you that education is more than personal achievement; it is also a responsibility to think critically, act with integrity, and contribute to a more just world.

My deepest gratitude goes to my husband. You were my companion in resilience and my shelter in difficult seasons. You understood that this journey was never merely an academic pursuit, but a promise, to memory, to family, and to homeland. While I carried the weight of research and distance, you carried the weight of life beside me with patience, strength, and unwavering support. Your presence transformed struggle into perseverance and doubt into determination. This achievement is not mine alone; it is ours.

Finally, I acknowledge the deeper inspiration that has shaped both my intellectual and personal journey. My relationship with Palestine, its history, its people, and its enduring presence in the lives of those who carry it with them, has profoundly influenced the way I understand land, belonging, and justice. It has shaped the questions I ask as a planner and the responsibility I feel as a scholar.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Planning, Power, and the Politics of Misinformation

Urban planning is often described as a technical discipline concerned with zoning codes, transportation systems, infrastructure provision, and development regulation. In conventional accounts, planning is presented as a rational and data-driven practice that organizes urban space through professional expertise, evidence-based analysis, and participatory decision-making. Within this perspective, planning is expected to coordinate competing land uses, guide infrastructure investment, and promote collective well-being through orderly spatial development. The technical language of planning, maps, land classifications, and regulatory frameworks often conveys an image of neutrality, suggesting that planning decisions are guided primarily by objective analysis rather than political considerations.

Yet historically, planning has never been purely technical. Planning decisions determine who can occupy space, who can build, who can move, and who can remain in place. Zoning codes distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate land uses. Infrastructure investments signal whose neighborhoods are prioritized and whose are neglected. Planning maps draw boundaries that separate residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial territories. Through these instruments, planning does more than organize land use; it structures social relations and redistributes power across urban landscapes. The spatial arrangements produced by planning systems therefore shape everyday life, influencing access to housing, mobility, food systems, employment opportunities, and environmental resources.

Critical planning scholarships have long emphasized that planning operates within broader political and economic systems rather than outside them (Harvey, 1985; Fainstein, 2010). Spatial interventions often support state formation, capital accumulation, and territorial consolidation processes. As Scott (1998) demonstrates, modernist planning systems simplify complex social and ecological environments to render them administratively legible. This simplification process allows governing institutions to manage territory more efficiently, but it also privileges certain forms of knowledge while marginalizing others. Communities whose land practices, livelihoods, or spatial arrangements fall outside official planning categories may find their practices rendered illegible or unauthorized within formal planning frameworks.

During the twentieth century, planning theory increasingly framed planning as a deliberative and participatory practice. Scholars such as Healey (1997) and Forester (1999) emphasized communicative rationality, collaborative governance, and inclusive public deliberation. In this idealized model, planning institutions function as arenas where stakeholders exchange knowledge, negotiate conflicts, and collectively shape spatial futures. Public participation processes are intended to ensure that planning decisions incorporate diverse perspectives and reflect shared societal goals.

Future-casting therefore becomes a central function of planning. Planning decisions do not merely regulate present land uses; they shape how societies imagine and construct futures. Through planning processes, institutions define which spatial problems require attention, which development pathways appear legitimate, and which visions of urban life are prioritized or marginalized. In this sense, planning determines not only how cities are governed today but also which urban futures become politically imaginable. The power to define problems and propose solutions is therefore also the power to shape the horizons of possibility within planning debates.

However, the historical record demonstrates that this deliberative ideal has rarely been fully realized. Planning institutions have frequently operated within asymmetrical power structures, particularly in colonial and racially stratified contexts where spatial decisions reinforced inequality rather than corrected it. Zoning regimes, infrastructure placement, land classification systems, and development regulations have often been used to consolidate territorial authority and control access to land.

Historical examples illustrate these dynamics clearly. In the United States, urban renewal programs displaced communities of color under the language of modernization and progress (Jacobs, 1961; Fullilove, 2004). In South Africa, apartheid planning structured cities through rigid racial zoning and spatial segregation (Christopher, 1994; Turok, 2001). In Palestine, land classification systems, permit regimes, and fragmented jurisdiction have produced uneven sovereignty and regulatory precarity (Yiftachel, 2009; Weizman, 2007). In each context, planning tools functioned not simply as neutral instruments of spatial coordination but as mechanisms of territorial consolidation.

These histories continue to shape contemporary planning environments. Communities that have experienced dispossession, demolition, displacement, or regulatory exclusion often approach new planning initiatives with skepticism. Trust in planning institutions is historically conditioned, and public debates about development frequently reflect accumulated experiences of spatial injustice.

At the same time, planning now operates within increasingly complex information environments. Misinformation has become a central concern in contemporary political communication. It is commonly defined as the circulation of false or misleading information regardless of intent (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Research across communication and political science has shown that emotionally charged misinformation spreads rapidly across digital networks (Vosoughi et al., 2018), and that corrective information often fails to fully reverse prior beliefs (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Individuals frequently interpret policy debates through identity-based reasoning and preexisting narratives (Kunda, 1990; Kahne & Bowyer, 2017).

Misinformation is commonly understood as the circulation of false or misleading information, often associated with digital media ecosystems and electoral politics. Within urban planning scholarships, however, misinformation has received limited systematic attention. Planning theory has traditionally focused on deliberation, communicative rationality, and participatory governance (Healey, 1997; Forester, 1999), often if policy disagreements arise primarily from competing interests rather than from structured distortions in interpretive framing.

However, this thesis argues that misinformation in planning cannot be understood solely as digital rumors or viral falsehood. In contexts shaped by colonial histories and spatial inequality, misinformation may become embedded within the governance of land itself. Rather than appearing only as isolated inaccuracies, misinformation can operate through institutionalized narrative framing that obscures structural power relations and narrows the range of interpretations available within planning debates.

Planning systems materially structure inequality through legibility, differential legality, and infrastructural control. Yet these structural hierarchies do not stabilize themselves automatically. They endure because narrative framing converts political asymmetries into administrative rationality. When land dispossession is reframed from development, mobility restrictions such as security, informality as illegality, or territorial constraint as environmental necessity. Narrative framing reshapes

how spatial conditions are interpreted. In these contexts, misinformation becomes spatially consequential because it influences how planning institutions understand problems and justify regulatory interventions.

This thesis therefore defines misinformation as a structured form of interpretive distortion embedded within planning discourse that obscures underlying power relations and naturalizes spatial hierarchy, regardless of whether the distortion is intentional. In this sense, misinformation is not an anomaly within planning systems but a mechanism through which spatial governance stabilizes itself.

1.1 Colonial Legacies and the Production of Spatial Hierarchies

To understand how misinformation operates within planning institutions, it is necessary to historically situate planning. Colonial and settler-colonial governance systems frequently used planning instruments such as cadastral mapping, zoning regulation, infrastructure development, and land classification to reorganize territory along racial, political, and economic lines (Porter, 2010; Yiftachel, 2006). Planning tools became mechanisms through which colonial authorities consolidated territorial control and structured unequal access to land.

Yiftachel (2009) describes the resulting spatial conditions as “gray spaces", zones suspended between legality and illegality, recognition, and exclusion. These spaces are not accidental anomalies but are systematically produced through regulatory ambiguity, selective enforcement, and discretionary governance. Populations inhabiting gray spaces may remain physically present within cities while lacking full legal recognition or secure access to infrastructure and services.

Food systems frequently occupy these gray zones. Informal markets, small-scale agricultural production, street vending, and subsistence farming often operate within uncertain regulatory frameworks where legality can shift depending on policy decisions and enforcement practices. These activities may be tolerated under certain conditions while simultaneously framed as problematic or illegal within official planning of discourse.

When misinformation circulates safety, contamination, criminality, disorder, or inefficiency, it often attaches to these already precarious spatial arrangements. Misinformation does not create inequality independently; rather, it activates and amplifies structural vulnerability. Structural vulnerability refers to conditions produced through planning systems that place communities in precarious spatial positions within urban environments. These conditions may include unequal land access, exclusion from infrastructure networks, regulatory uncertainty surrounding informal economic activities, or restricted mobility across urban territories. Because such conditions are produced through institutional planning decisions, they create environments where narratives about danger, illegality, or inefficiency can easily attach to spaces and populations. In this way, misinformation reinforces and legitimizes spatial hierarchies that are already embedded within planning institutions.

1.2 Why Food Systems?

Food systems provide a particularly powerful analytical lens for examining these dynamics because they sit at the intersection of land governance, infrastructure provision, regulatory recognition, and everyday survival. Food production depends on secure access to agricultural land, reliable water allocation, and energy systems. Food distribution requires transportation infrastructure, market access, and regulatory approval. Informal food economies, including street vendors, small-scale farming operations, and local markets, often operate within zones of regulatory ambiguity where legality is negotiated rather than guaranteed.

Because food systems operate across multiple spatial and institutional dimensions, they reveal how planning decisions shape everyday life. At the same time, food carries strong cultural and emotional meanings associated with safety, purity, identity, and survival. Concerns about sanitation, contamination, and legality frequently appear within planning debates about food markets and informal vendors. These narratives can rapidly justify regulatory interventions that reshape land access, market structures, and mobility patterns.

By centering food systems, this thesis grounds debates about misinformation in material land-use practices. It demonstrates how narrative framing within planning institutions can reshape everyday geographies of survival by influencing those who can produce, distribute, and access food within urban environments.

Research Question:

This thesis investigates the following research question:

How does misinformation function as a form of power in urban planning, particularly in shaping food systems within postcolonial and settler-colonial contexts?

Research Problem

↓

Misinformation in Planning

↓

Theoretical Framework

(Legibility – Differential Legality – Infrastructural Power)

↓

Comparative Case Studies

Hebron | Cape Town | Madison

↓

Comparative Analysis

↓

Planning Futures Under Constrained Sovereignty

Figure 1:Analytical Structure of the Thesis. Source: Author

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this thesis is illustrated in Figure 2. The framework highlights how historical power structures including colonial governance, racialized land regimes, and settler territorial systems shape contemporary planning institutions. These institutions organize urban space through zoning regulation, infrastructure investment, and systems of regulatory recognition that determine how land can be used and by whom. Within these governance systems, narrative framing mechanisms influence how spatial inequalities are interpreted and justified. Narratives emphasizing

security, development, legality, or sustainability often shape how planning institutions define spatial problems and propose solutions. Through these processes, misinformation may emerge not as isolated falsehood, but as structured interpretive distortion embedded within planning discourse.

Misinformation therefore functions as a mechanism of spatial governance by translating historically produced spatial inequalities into administratively rational planning outcomes. Food systems provide a particularly revealing analytical lens for examining these dynamics because they depend directly on land access, water allocation, infrastructure networks, and regulatory recognition. As a result, inequalities embedded in planning institutions often become visible through the organization of food production, distribution, and market access.

Historical Power Structures

(Colonialism – Racialized Land Regimes – Settler Territorial Systems)

↓

Planning Governance Systems

(Zoning, land classification, infrastructure control, mobility regimes)

↓

Narrative Framing Mechanisms

(Security | Development | Neutrality Narratives)

↓

Misinformation

(Structured interpretive distortion that narrows planning debate)

↓

Stabilization of Spatial Hierarchy

(Unequal land regimes – differential legality – gray space)

↓

Food Systems as Analytical Lens

(Land access, water, infrastructure, markets)

↓

Comparative Case Studies

Hebron | Cape Town | Madison

↓

Planning Futures

(Constrained sovereignty and reconstruction)

Figure 2:Conceptual Framework: Misinformation as Spatial Governance. Source: Author.

1.4 Research Design and Methodological Approach

This thesis employs a qualitative comparative case study design to examine how narrative framing within planning institutions stabilizes spatial hierarchy across distinct political regimes. The research focuses on three cases: Hebron (West Bank), Cape Town (South Africa), and Madison (United States). These cases were selected to represent distinct governance regimes, militarized occupation, post-apartheid democratic capitalism, and liberal settler municipal governance, while allowing comparison of a shared analytical mechanism: the interaction between narrative framing and spatial regulation within food systems.

Comparative design does not seek equivalence between political conditions. Instead, it isolates a common mechanism operating across structurally different contexts.

The analysis draws primarily on qualitative examination of secondary data sources. These include municipal planning documents, zoning regulations, policy reports, development plans, food systems planning materials, intergovernmental agreements, and publicly available institutional archives. By analyzing the language and narrative structures within these materials, the research identifies how planning institutions frame spatial problems, justify regulatory interventions, and construct narratives that influence planning outcomes.

The analytical strategy combines interpretive institutional analysis with comparative mechanism tracing. The analysis proceeds through several stages: identifying spatial regulatory structures governing land and food systems; examining narrative framing within planning discourse; analyzing how these narratives align with obscure structural power asymmetries; and comparing these dynamics across the three cases.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 examines colonial spatial governance and the historical mechanisms through which planning systems produce spatial hierarchy. Chapter 3 develops the theoretical framework linking misinformation to spatial governance. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the empirical case studies of Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison respectively, analyzing how narrative framing operates within planning institutions in each context. Chapter 7 provides a comparative analysis across the cases to identify common mechanisms through which misinformation stabilizes spatial inequality. Chapter 8 explores future planning conditions under constrained sovereignty, using Palestine as a conceptual anchor to consider how reconstruction, food systems, and emerging epistemic infrastructures, including algorithmic governance, may shape planning futures.

Together, these chapters demonstrate how misinformation operates not merely as informational error but as a mechanism of spatial governance that stabilizes unequal land regimes across diverse political contexts. Figure 3 summarizes the conceptual framework guiding the analysis. The framework illustrates how colonial spatial governance structures planning institutions, which in turn shape narrative framing processes through which misinformation operates. These narratives influence how food systems are governed and ultimately contribute to the reproduction of spatial inequality.

Chapter 2: Colonial Spatial Governance and the Structural Conditions of Misinformation

2.1 Introduction: Planning as a Territorial Technology

Urban planning is frequently described as a technical discipline concerned with land-use coordination, infrastructure provision, and regulatory management. In conventional accounts, planning appears as an administrative practice that organizes urban space through zoning regulations, development controls, and infrastructure investment. These technical instruments are often presented as neutral tools designed to guide orderly development and promote collective welfare.

However, planning has historically functioned as more than a technical coordination mechanism. Planning operates as a territorial technology through which governing authorities organize space, consolidate sovereignty, and regulate access to land and resources. Through cadastral mapping, zoning codes, land classification regimes, infrastructure networks, and development regulation, planning institutions translate political authority into spatial order. These tools determine how land is categorized, how mobility is structured, and how infrastructure resources are distributed across urban and regional territories.

Understanding planning as a territorial technology reveals that spatial governance is inseparable from broader political processes. Planning systems do not merely organize existing landscapes; they actively produce territorial arrangements that reflect relations of power. The spatial categories embedded within planning frameworks determine which forms of land use are considered legitimate, which populations are recognized within regulatory systems, and which territories remain marginal or precarious.

This chapter argues that misinformation can only be fully understood within the structural architecture of colonial spatial governance. Colonial spatial governance refers to the material and regulatory mechanisms through which territory is rendered administratively legible, legality is distributed unevenly across populations, and infrastructural systems are organized to stabilize hierarchical authority over land and resources. These mechanisms do not simply regulate urban development; they structure the conditions through which spatial inequality is produced and maintained.

Planning institutions, such as municipal zoning boards, land registries, development authorities, environmental agencies, and military planning administrations, play central roles in these processes. Whether operating within formal colonial regimes, settler-colonial states, or postcolonial governance systems, Planning institutions, such as municipal zoning boards, land registries, development authorities, environmental agencies, and military planning administrations, play central roles in these processes. Whether operating within formal colonial regimes, settler-colonial states, or postcolonial governance systems, planning institutions have repeatedly functioned as instruments through which asymmetrical power relations become embedded within spatial form (King, 1976; Porter, 2010).

Misinformation does not produce these hierarchies. Rather, it stabilizes them. To understand how misinformation operates within planning systems, it is therefore necessary to first examine how spatial inequality is materially constructed through regulatory frameworks and infrastructural coordination.

This chapter identifies three structural mechanisms through which colonial spatial governance operates:

- Legibility and territorial simplification
- Differential legality and gray space production
- infrastructural power and urban–regional control

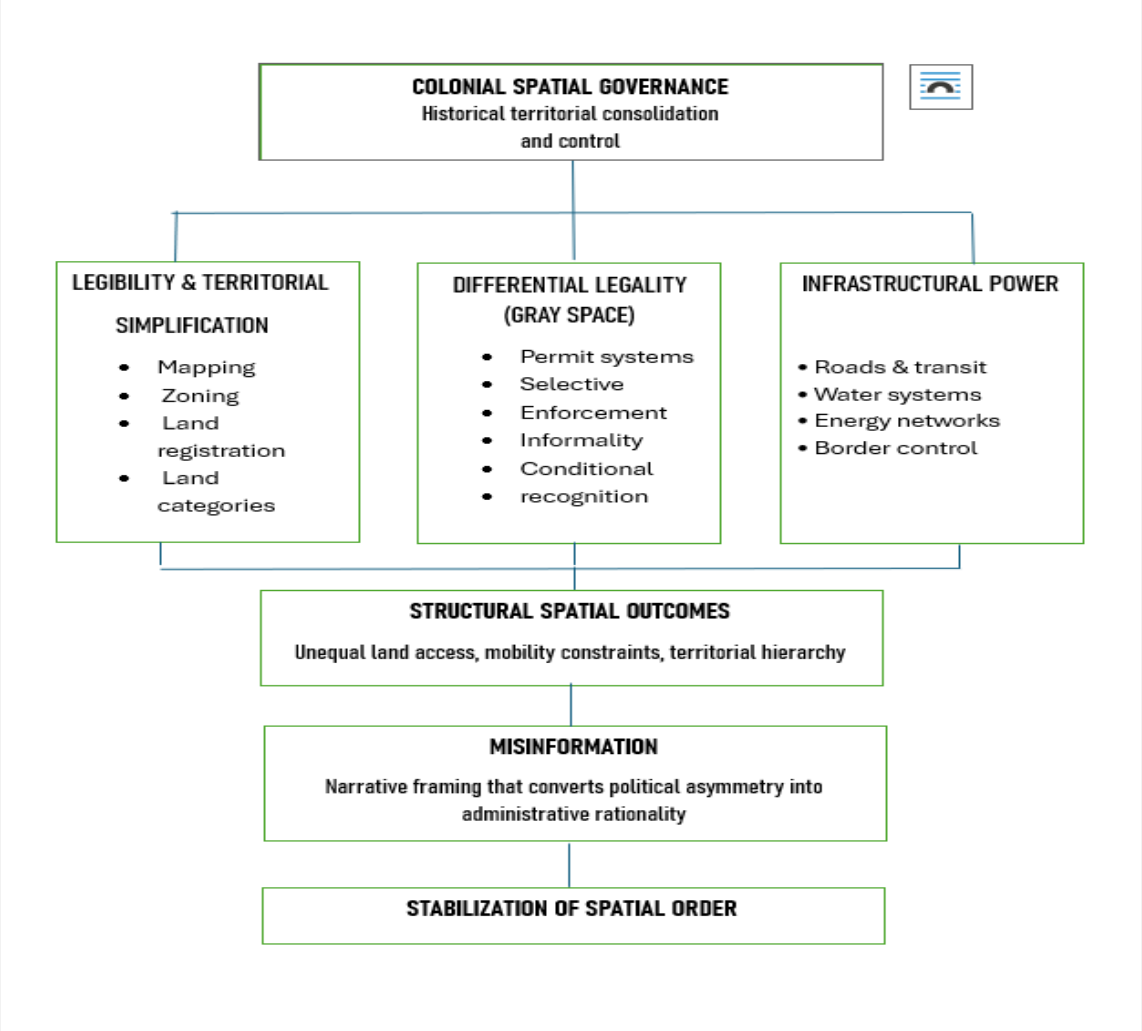


Figure 3:Structural Mechanisms of Colonial Spatial Governance. Source: Author

Conceptual Overview These mechanisms shape the institutional environments in which planning discourse operates and establish the material conditions that later enable misinformation to stabilize spatial inequality.

The figure illustrates how planning systems translate political authority into spatial governance through regulatory classification, infrastructure coordination, and differential recognition of land uses and populations. These structural mechanisms produce uneven territorial conditions that later become subject to narrative framing within planning discourse

2.2 Legibility, Mapping, and the Administrative Production of Territory

James Scott (1998) famously argues that modern states seek legibility: the simplification of complex social and ecological systems into standardized, measurable categories that can be administered by centralized institutions. Legibility allows governing authorities to manage territory by translating diverse landscapes and social practices into forms that can be recorded, mapped, and regulated.

In urban planning, legibility takes material form through cadastral surveys, zoning ordinances, master plans, and infrastructure maps. These instruments transform complex spatial practices into administratively recognizable categories. Agricultural land becomes a zoning district. Informal settlements become regulatory violations. Ecological landscapes become development zones. Through these classifications, planning institutions translate lived environments into regulatory systems that can be governed through law and policy.

In colonial contexts, cadastral mapping was not merely descriptive; it was transformative. Mapping systems reorganize land tenure by providing documented ownership over customary land practices. Mundy and Saumarez Smith (2007) demonstrate that British Mandate land registration in Palestine restructured land governance by replacing collective and customary systems with individualized legal ownership frameworks. Similarly, in settler-colonial North America, Indigenous territorial governance systems were displaced by survey grids and parcelization that facilitated settler land allocation (Porter, 2010).

Urban planning institutionalizes legibility through multiple regulatory instruments, including:

- zoning districts
- land-use classifications
- growth boundaries
- Environmental Overlays
- development control regulations

These regulatory frameworks transform relational land practices into abstract administrative units. Seasonal grazing systems, subsistence agriculture, informal markets, and communal tenure arrangements often become categorized as “non-conforming,” “informal,” or “unauthorized” within planning regulations.

Legibility simplifies complexity, but it also redefines legitimacy. Once territory is mapped into regulatory categories, activities that fall outside those classifications are frequently framed as deviant, inefficient, or illegal. Planning systems therefore do not merely describe spatial reality; they reshape it by redefining which land practices are formally recognized, and which remain marginal.

Importantly, legibility is not limited to colonial territories. Similar processes appear in many planning regimes. In apartheid South Africa, the Group Areas Act translated racial classification into urban spatial form through rigid zoning boundaries (Christopher, 1994). In the United States, redlining maps transformed racial hierarchy into mortgage risk classifications that shaped neighborhood investment patterns (Rothstein, 2017). In both cases, planning instruments made social hierarchy administratively legible. Legibility therefore establishes the foundational grammar of spatial governance. By translating complex landscapes into standardized categories, planning institutions create the regulatory foundation upon which differential legality and infrastructural power operate.

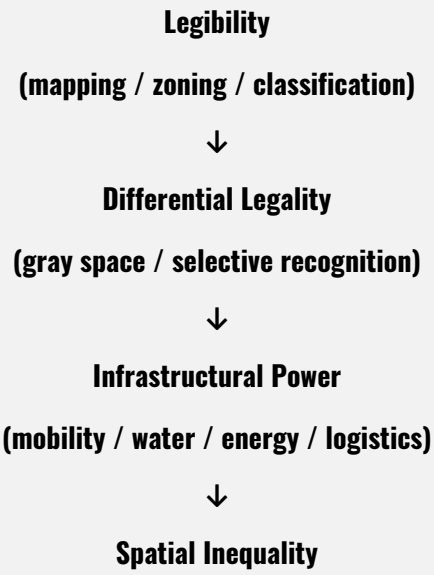


Figure 4:Structural foundations of colonial spatial governance. Source: Author

Planning institutions organize territory through three interconnected mechanisms: legibility, differential legality, and infrastructural power. Together these mechanisms' structure uneven access to land, mobility, and resources, producing spatial inequalities that later become stabilized through narrative framing and planning discourse.

2.3 Differential Legality: Planning as Hierarchical Recognition

While legibility simplifies territory through classification, planning systems do not distribute recognition evenly across the spaces and populations they govern. Once land is categorized through zoning districts, cadastral maps, and regulatory frameworks, planning institutions determine which uses and populations receive formal recognition and which remain marginal or precarious. This process produces what can be understood as differential legality, a condition in which regulatory recognition is unevenly distributed across urban space.

Differential legality refers to the structured allocation of formal recognition to certain land uses and populations while others remain tolerated, precarious, or criminalized. Planning systems institutionalize this differentiation through a range of regulatory mechanisms, including:

- Permit approval and denial, determining whether land uses receive authorization
- Selective enforcement, through which regulations are applied unevenly
- Discretionary zoning variances, allowing selective relaxation of regulations
- Conditional use authorizations, permitting activities only under administrative conditions
- Environmental designation regimes, restricting certain forms of land use

Through these instruments, planning authorities maintain flexibility in how regulatory frameworks are applied across urban space. This flexibility allows planning institutions to formally recognize certain activities while keeping others within conditions of uncertainty or partial legality.

Yiftachel (2009) conceptualizes the spatial outcome of differential legality as gray space, zones suspended between legality and illegality, recognition, and exclusion. Gray spaces are neither fully incorporated into formal planning systems nor entirely removed from them. Instead, they exist within conditions of conditional tolerance in which their continued existence depends on discretionary governance decisions.

Urban scholars have demonstrated that these conditions are not accidental or temporary. Roy (2005) argues that informality is not external to planning systems but is actively produced by them. Informal settlements and informal economies often emerge where regulatory frameworks render certain practices unauthorized while simultaneously relying on them economically. Watson (2009) further suggests that formal planning systems frequently universalize regulatory marginalizing alternative spatial practices that do not conform to dominant planning models.

Differential legality is visible across many urban contexts. Informal settlements may be tolerated but denied infrastructure services. Street vendors may be permitted in designated zones while facing confiscation or removal elsewhere. Agricultural land may be classified as a temporary use awaiting development. Indigenous territories may receive symbolic recognition without being fully integrated into zoning authority or regulatory decision-making.

Gray space therefore represents not administrative failure but structured flexibility within planning governance. By maintaining populations and land uses within zones of regulatory uncertainty, planning institutions preserve discretionary authority over land and mobility. However, structural precarity alone does not guarantee its long-term acceptance. These spatial arrangements must also be interpreted, justified, and normalized within planning of discourse. The narrative framing that accomplishes this normalization becomes the domain through which misinformation operates.

This chapter therefore analyzes three structural mechanisms through which colonial spatial governance organizes territory and population:

Legibility and territorial simplification, through which land and populations are classified and made administratively visible.

Differential legality and gray space production, through which recognition is unevenly distributed across urban space; and Infrastructural power and urban-regional control, through which mobility, circulation, and access to resources are regulated.

Together, these mechanisms create structural conditions through which spatial inequality is produced and maintained. Understanding how these systems operate provides the foundation for analyzing how misinformation later functions to stabilize and legitimize these arrangements within planning discourse.

2.4 Infrastructural Power and Urban–Regional Control

While legibility organizes territorial classification and differential legality distributes recognition within that classification, infrastructural power determines the material reach of governance across space.

Infrastructural power refers to the capacity of governing authorities to shape spatial life through control over material systems such as transportation networks, water allocation systems, electricity grids, border crossings, and development

corridors. These infrastructures structure how people move, where economic activity occurs, and how resources circulate. As Castells (1996) argues, contemporary spatial power increasingly operates through control over networked infrastructures that organize flows of people, goods, and information across urban and regional systems. Planning institutions play a central role in designing, financing, and regulating these systems.

Michael Mann's concept of infrastructural power is particularly relevant to urban governance because it highlights how state authority operates through everyday material coordination rather than only through law or coercion (Mann, 1984). Control over roads determines which communities can access markets and employment centers. Control over water allocation shapes agricultural viability and settlement patterns. Control over border regimes structures trade dependency and labor mobility.

Urban planning embeds infrastructural power through a range of spatial decisions, including:

Highway routing decisions, which structure regional accessibility and shape urban expansion patterns.

Transit investment patterns determine which neighborhoods receive reliable mobility infrastructure.

Utility extension priorities, including water, electricity, and sewer systems that determine where development becomes viable.

Industrial zoning corridors, which concentrate economic activity and shape labor geographies.

Port, logistics, and trade infrastructure, which regulate the circulation of goods across regional and international markets.

These infrastructural decisions are rarely neutral. They frequently reproduce existing political and economic hierarchies. In apartheid South Africa, for example, highway construction and rail infrastructure physically separated Black townships from economic centers while ensuring labor access for industrial zones (Turok, 2001). In contexts of military occupation, checkpoints and mobility restrictions regulate circulation and fragment territorial connectivity. Even within liberal democratic planning systems, suburban infrastructure investment has historically privileged property-owning constituencies while limiting access to transportation and services in marginalized neighborhoods.

Food systems reveal infrastructural power with clarity. Food production depends on land tenure security, water availability, irrigation systems, and energy infrastructure. Food circulation depends on transportation corridors, wholesale markets, cold storage systems, and retail networks. When infrastructure is unevenly distributed or strategically restricted, food systems become structurally dependent on the authorities that control these networks.

Thus, colonial spatial governance operates not only through legal classification or regulatory enforcement but also through the material coordination of urban and regional systems. Infrastructure determines which territories become economically viable, which communities gain access to resources, and which populations remain spatially marginalized.

2.5 Planning Institutions as Sites of Territorial Consolidation

Planning institutions do not simply implement political decisions made elsewhere. They actively translate sovereignty into spatial form through everyday administrative practices. Municipal comprehensive plans, zoning maps, development codes, environmental regulations, and urban renewal programs all function as mechanisms through which territorial authority becomes embedded within governance systems.

These institutions define the regulatory conditions under which land can be used, infrastructure can be built, and economic activity can occur. In doing so, they structure how territory is organized and how populations interact with spatial governance systems. Planning institutions therefore play a central role in consolidating territorial authority.

In settler-colonial contexts, planning systems often normalize property regimes and urban expansion patterns consolidating territorial control (Porter, 2010). In postcolonial cities, inherited spatial segregation may be reproduced through market-driven development processes that reinforce historical inequalities (Robinson, 2011). In militarized contexts, permit systems and land classification regimes to structure sovereignty through administrative procedures.

Across these contexts, planning institutions produce spatial hierarchy materially through regulatory frameworks and infrastructural coordination. However, structural inequality alone does not guarantee its acceptance. Planning systems also generate narratives that justify regulatory decisions and shape spatial inequalities.

These narratives play a critical role in stabilizing what planning structures produce.

2.6 From Structure to Misinformation

Colonial spatial governance produces legibility, differential legality, and infrastructural asymmetry. Together, these mechanisms generate structural inequalities in land access, mobility, and regulatory recognition. These inequalities shape how populations experience planning systems and how spatial resources are distributed across urban territories.

Yet spatial hierarchy does not endure alone. Inequality must also be interpreted and justified within public discourse and institutional decision-making. Regulatory asymmetries must appear reasonable or necessary. Displacement must be framed as development. Mobility restrictions must be framed as security. Environmental exclusions must be framed as sustainability.

Narrative framing performs this interpretive work. Through institutional discourse, historically contingent power relations can be reframed from technical necessities or administrative rationalities. Political inequality becomes translated into the language of efficiency, modernization, safety, or environmental protection.

It is within this interpretive process that misinformation becomes consequential. Misinformation operates not simply as factual error but as a structured interpretive mechanism through which planning discourse narrows the range of acceptable explanations for spatial inequality. When institutional narratives obscure structural power relations and present unequal spatial arrangements as inevitable or rational outcomes, misinformation stabilizes the conditions produced by colonial spatial governance.

The structural mechanisms examined in this chapter therefore establish the material terrain upon which misinformation operates. Legibility simplifies territory; differential legality distributes recognition unevenly, and infrastructural power organizes material dependency. Together, these conditions create a spatial environment in which narrative framing can transform structural inequality into administrative common sense.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter examines colonial spatial governance operates through three interconnected mechanisms: legibility, differential legality, and infrastructural power. Through these mechanisms, planning institutions organize territory, regulate recognition, and coordinate material infrastructure systems that shape urban and regional life.

These structural processes produce spatial hierarchies in land access, mobility, and regulatory recognition. However, structural inequality does not automatically normalize itself. For such arrangements to persist, they must also be interpreted and justified within planning of discourse.

Misinformation performs this stabilizing function. By framing historically produced inequalities such as technical necessities or administrative rationalities, misinformation obscures the structural conditions that generate spatial hierarchy. In this way, misinformation operates as an epistemic mechanism that reinforces the material structures of colonial spatial governance.

This chapter has established structural architecture through which spatial inequality is produced within planning systems. However, structural arrangements alone do not explain how such inequalities become normalized within planning discourse. The following chapter therefore turns to the epistemic dimension of spatial governance, examining how misinformation operates through narrative framing to stabilize and legitimize these structural conditions.

Chapter 3: Misinformation as Spatial Governance: Narrative Framing, Epistemic Narrowing, and Administrative Rationality

3.1 Introduction: Repositioning Misinformation in Planning Theory

Chapter 2 demonstrated that colonial spatial governance produces structural hierarchies through mechanisms of legibility, differential legality, and infrastructural power. These mechanisms organize territory materially by classifying land, regulating recognition, and structuring access to mobility, infrastructure, and resources. These mechanisms organize territory, regulate recognition, and structure of access to land, mobility, and infrastructure. However, the persistence of these spatial hierarchies cannot be explained solely through their material construction. Unequal territorial arrangements must also be interpreted, justified, and stabilized within institutional discourse to endure across time and across different governance regimes.

This chapter argues that misinformation functions as the epistemic mechanism through which these structural inequalities become normalized within planning systems. While colonial spatial governance produces unequal spatial arrangements, misinformation operates through narrative framing and institutional discourse to transform those inequalities into administratively rational outcomes. Through this interpretive process, historically contingent political decisions are reframed from technical necessities; regulatory outcomes appear procedurally inevitable, and structural asymmetries become embedded within everyday planning practice.

In planning contexts, misinformation rarely appears as fabricated data or overt deception. Instead, it operates through institutionalized narrative framing that selectively emphasizes interpretations of spatial problems while obscuring the historical and political conditions that produced them. Through this process, land dispossession may be reframed as development opportunity; mobility restrictions may be justified through security discourse, and infrastructural inequality may appear as logistical limitation rather than territorial control.

Within this thesis, misinformation is therefore understood as a structural feature of spatial governance rather than an episodic informational anomaly, operating through institutional narratives that shape how spatial problems are interpreted within planning systems. It is embedded in planning documents, regulatory language, development narratives, and professional norms that shape how spatial problems are defined and interpreted. By influencing which explanations appear legitimate within planning discourse, misinformation narrows the interpretive horizons through which institutions understand urban space.

This chapter develops this argument through three analytical steps. First, it expands the concept of misinformation beyond its traditional focus on media environments to examine its structural role within planning institutions. Second, it analyzes narrative framing as the primary mechanism through which **misinformation operates in spatial governance. Third, it** examines how epistemic narrowing and administrative rationality transform historically contingent inequalities into administratively normalized outcomes.



Figure 5:Gray space as conditional legitimacy in planning systems. Source: Author

Planning systems frequently maintain spaces and activities in conditions of partial recognition rather than full legality or complete prohibition. These "gray spaces" are permitted but remain administratively precarious. Across the cases examined in this thesis, gray space appears through militarized permit regimes in Hebron, regulatory precarity surrounding informal food trade in Cape Town, and forms of symbolic recognition without territorial redistribution in Madison.

3.2 From Information Disorder to Structural Misinformation

Communication scholarships often distinguish between misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is defined as false or misleading information shared without intent to deceive, whereas disinformation refers to deliberately deceptive information (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). While this distinction is analytically useful within media studies and electoral politics, planning contexts require a broader conceptual framework.

In planning systems, intent is often diffused. Policy language emerges through bureaucratic drafting processes, professional conventions, political negotiation, and institutional inertia. Narrative distortions may therefore emerge without coordinated attempts to deceive. Restricting analysis to deliberate disinformation would obscure how structural inequalities become normalized through neutral administrative discourse.

Research on motivated reasoning demonstrates that individuals interpret information in ways that reinforce existing beliefs and identities (Kunda, 1990). Studies of digital misinformation have shown that emotionally charged narratives often spread more rapidly than corrective information (Vosoughi et al., 2018), and that factual corrections frequently fail to reverse misperceptions once they become established (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). These findings highlight important cognitive dynamics in contemporary information environments. However, planning systems operate primarily at an institutional rather than individual scale.

Within planning institutions, misinformation often functions through processes such as selective problem definition, omission of historical context, framing of structural inequalities as natural constraints, and translation of political decisions into

technical language. These processes reshape how spatial conditions are interpreted and which policy responses appear reasonable.

For this reason, misinformation within spatial governance is best understood as structured interpretive distortion embedded within institutional practice rather than isolated factual error. This broader conceptualization allows the analysis to examine how narrative framing operates within planning discourse to stabilize unequal spatial arrangements.

3.3 Narrative Framing as the Mechanism of Misinformation

Narrative framing refers to the process through which certain aspects of reality are emphasized while others are backgrounded or excluded (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993). Frames influence how problems are defined, how causal responsibility is assigned, and which solutions appear appropriate. By structuring interpretation, frames shape the boundaries of political debate.

Within planning systems, dominant narrative frames frequently include themes such as security and protection, development and modernization, environmental necessity, economic growth, procedural neutrality, and sustainability. These narratives organize how planning problems are understood by policymakers, planners, and the public.

Importantly, these frames are not inherently false. Security, development, and environmental protection are legitimate policy concerns. However, when these frames are selectively mobilized, they can obscure structural asymmetries in land distribution, infrastructural control, or historical dispossession. For example, displacement may be framed as modernization; informal economic activity may be framed as disorder, and territorial restrictions may be justified through security discourse.

Rein and Schön (1993) argue that policy controversies often reflect struggles over competing frames rather than simple disagreements about facts. Hajer (1995) similarly demonstrates how discourse coalitions stabilize storylines within environmental policy debates, making alternative interpretations appear unrealistic or irrelevant. Over time, these narrative frames become embedded within institutional language and professional practice.

Narrative framing therefore functions as the primary mechanism through which misinformation operates within planning discourse. By structuring interpretation, frames narrow the range of explanations considered legitimate while preserving administrative coherence within planning institutions.

3.4 Epistemic Narrowing and the Depoliticization of Space

Misinformation operates through a process that can be described as epistemic narrowing; the contraction of what is considered politically relevant or institutionally actionable within planning discourse. Epistemic narrowing occurs when structural causes of spatial inequality are excluded from policy debates, leaving only technical explanations available.

This process can occur in several ways. Structural land dispossession may be omitted from zoning debates. Infrastructural asymmetry may be reframed from logistical limitations. Economic decline may be attributed to neighborhood disorder rather than mobility restriction or capital withdrawal. Agricultural displacement may be presented as inevitable urban development.

Through epistemic narrowing, political questions become technical planning problems. Issues that originate in historical processes of territorial consolidation appear instead as administrative challenges requiring regulatory management.

Planning theory has long emphasized communicative rationality as a foundation for democratic planning practice (Healey, 1997). However, communicative arenas operate within bounded epistemic fields. When structural asymmetry is excluded from deliberation, participation may still occur, but the scope of debate becomes constrained. As Forester (1999) observes, planners mediate knowledge and power within institutional contexts that shape how information is interpreted.

Epistemic narrowing therefore does not eliminate disagreement within planning processes. Instead, it defines the terms under which disagreement can occur. Certain explanations become unintelligible or irrelevant within institutional discourse, while others become taken for granted as common sense.

3.5 Administrative Rationality and the Normalization of Inequality

Administrative rationality refers to the process through which historically contingent political arrangements become translated into procedural necessity within bureaucratic systems. Through administrative rationality, regulatory outcomes appear as routine administrative decisions rather than as expressions of territorial power.

Permit denials may appear as simple regulatory compliance rather than territorial consolidation mechanisms. Informal trade enforcement may appear as urban order management rather than restrictions on livelihood systems. Land classification regimes may appear as environmental stewardship rather than assertions of sovereignty. Development expansion may appear as economic inevitability rather than spatial restructuring.

Deborah Stone (1989) argues that policy categories construct causal stories that shape how social problems are interpreted. Once embedded within administrative frameworks, these causal narratives acquire institutional authority and become difficult to challenge.

Administrative rationality stabilizes inequality by detaching regulatory outcomes from their historical origins. What was once politically contested becomes bureaucratically routine. Through this process, structural asymmetry becomes embedded within everyday governance practice.

This is the point at which misinformation becomes spatially consequential. By obscuring structural asymmetry and presenting regulatory outcomes as neutral administrative procedures, misinformation transforms spatial hierarchy into administrative common sense.

3.6 Institutional Sites of Misinformation in Planning

Misinformation within planning systems is produced and reproduced through multiple institutional processes. Regulatory codification embeds interpretive assumptions within zoning maps, land-use classifications, and permit categories. Once codified, these interpretive frameworks become administratively binding and shape spatial problems.

Planning reports and policy documents frequently deploy language of growth, resilience, security, or sustainability without explicitly addressing the structural inequalities embedded in land governance systems. Media discourse often simplifies complex planning debates into narratives of development urgency, neighborhood disorder, or safety concerns, reinforcing dominant interpretive frames.

Professional training and planning education transmit dominant planning paradigms and interpretive frameworks across generations of practitioners, reinforcing particular ways of understanding spatial problems. Through these institutional

processes, misinformation becomes embedded within planning systems rather than appearing as episodic communication failures.

3.7 Distinguishing Misinformation from Ideology and Discourse

It is important to distinguish the concept of misinformation used in this thesis from related concepts such as ideology or discourse. Ideology refers broadly to structured belief systems that shape political interpretation, while discourse refers to patterned systems of meaning through which knowledge and authority are constructed.

While these concepts illuminate how power circulates through language, this thesis uses the concept of misinformation to capture a more specific mechanism: the structured interpretive distortion that obscures or reframes material power asymmetries within spatial governance.

Not all ideologies constitute misinformation, and not all discourse produces distortion. Misinformation occurs when narrative framing selectively omits structural conditions, recasts political decisions as technical inevitability, or systematically misattributes causality in ways that obscure asymmetrical power relations.

This distinction is important because planning systems frequently present themselves as neutral, procedural, and evidence based. When interpretive narrowing operates within administrative rationality, regulatory outcomes appear technically necessary rather than politically contingent.

Understanding misinformation in this way allows it to be analyzed not as viral digital falsehood but as embedded narrative power within planning practice.

3.8 Misinformation as Spatial Governance

Misinformation becomes spatial governance when narrative framing obscures the structural production of inequality, naturalizes infrastructural asymmetry, converts political constraint into technical inevitability, and limits deliberative imagination regarding alternative spatial futures.

Under these conditions, spatial hierarchies endure not primarily through coercion but through interpretive stabilization. Planning decisions appear rational, technical, and administratively necessary even when they reproduce unequal territorial arrangements.

Food systems reveal this dynamic with clarity. Food production depends on land tenure security and water allocation. Food distribution depends on transportation infrastructure and mobility systems. Food markets require regulatory recognition within planning frameworks. When restrictions on these systems are framed as security necessity, disorder management, development of inevitability, or procedural neutrality, narrative framing reshapes the material geography of food.

In this sense, misinformation is not external to planning systems. It operates as a mechanism through which planning authority stabilizes spatial hierarchy.

3.9 Linking Chapters 2 and 3

Chapter 2 demonstrated that colonial spatial governance produces unequal territorial arrangements through regulatory classification, differential legality, and infrastructural coordination. This chapter has shown that misinformation stabilizes those arrangements through narrative framing, epistemic narrowing, and administrative rationality.

- Structural spatial governance produces inequality.
- Misinformation normalizes it.
- Together, these processes constitute spatial governance.

3.10 Conclusion

Misinformation within planning systems does not require fabricated facts or deliberate deception. It operates through institutionalized narrative framing that obscures structural power relations and converts historically contingent political arrangements into administrative necessity.

By centering misinformation as a structural feature of spatial governance rather than an episodic communication anomaly, this thesis reframes planning theory. It demonstrates that the endurance of spatial hierarchy depends not only on material control but also on interpretive stabilization within institutional discourse.

In doing so, this thesis contributes to planning theory by extending the study of misinformation beyond media environments and digital communication. While existing research on misinformation has focused on social media and electoral politics, this research demonstrates that misinformation can also operate through institutional planning discourse. By examining how narrative framing, epistemic narrowing, and administrative rationality shape the interpretation of spatial problems, the thesis shows how unequal territorial arrangements become normalized within planning systems.

This conceptual framework bridges planning theory with emerging scholarships on misinformation and politics knowledge. It argues that spatial inequality persists not only because of material regulatory structures but also because institutional narratives stabilize those structures within everyday planning practice. By analyzing food systems as a lens through which these processes become visible, the thesis illustrates how narrative framing influences land governance, mobility, and economic circulation across different urban contexts.

The following chapters examine how these mechanisms operate empirically across three distinct planning contexts: a militarized occupation regime (Hebron), a post-apartheid urban governance system (Cape Town), and a liberal settler planning regime (Madison). Across these cases, food systems serve as a revealing lens through which narrative framing stabilizes unequal territorial arrangements and shapes the spatial governance of land, infrastructure, and economic life.

Chapter 4: Hebron: Food, Fragmentation, and the Governance of Legitimacy

The previous chapter established the conceptual framework through which this thesis analyzes misinformation as a form of spatial governance. It argued that misinformation operates not only through the circulation of false information but through institutional narrative framing that obscures structural power relations and converts historically contingent inequalities into administratively rational outcomes. Having developed this theoretical framework, the following chapters examine how these mechanisms operate empirically across different planning regimes. Hebron serves as the first case study, illustrating how narrative framing, regulatory asymmetry, and infrastructural control intersect to reshape food systems under conditions of military occupation. Hebron provides the first empirical case through which this thesis examines how misinformation functions as a form of spatial governance. Located in the southern West Bank, Hebron operates within the context of the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory, where overlapping systems of military administration, settlement expansion, and fragmented jurisdiction shape everyday life. In this environment, planning authority does not function as a neutral regulatory system. Instead, it operates through a combination of material restriction and narrative framing that together structure land access, mobility, economic life, and agricultural practice.

Hebron is particularly important for understanding how misinformation becomes embedded within planning because it reveals how spatial governance operates under conditions of fragmented sovereignty. The city is divided between areas under limited Palestinian administrative authority and areas under direct Israeli military control. Within this fragmented landscape, mobility is regulated through checkpoints, agricultural access is conditioned by coordination regimes, and land use is governed through permit systems administered by Israeli occupation authorities. These regulatory mechanisms shape not only the physical organization of the city but also the interpretive narratives through which planning decisions are justified and normalized.

Food systems provide a powerful analytical lens for examining these dynamics. Agricultural production, food markets, and everyday food practices depend directly on land access, water infrastructure, mobility corridors, and regulatory recognition. In Hebron, these systems operate within a context where agricultural land may fall under restrictive planning classifications, farmers may require military coordination to reach olive groves, and market circulation may be disrupted by checkpoint regimes and street closures. As a result, food production and exchange have become extremely sensitive indicators of how spatial governance functions under occupation.

This chapter argues that Hebron's contemporary food system has been reshaped through cumulative layers of territorial governance, including Ottoman land tenure structures, British mandate cadastral mapping, post-1948 regional restructuring, Israeli military occupation after 1967, and the administrative fragmentation formalized by the Oslo Accords. Each of these regimes introduced new forms of land classification, regulatory authority, and spatial division. Rather than replacing one another, these layers accumulated, producing a complex system in which land use, mobility, and agricultural practice operate within overlapping legal and administrative frameworks. Within this system, misinformation does not appear primarily as viral rumors or digital falsehoods. Instead, it operates through institutional narrative framing that shapes how spatial regulation is interpreted. Restrictions on agricultural access may be framed as a security necessity. Environmental

designation may justify limits on traditional food practices. Permit enforcement may present structural inequality as neutral regulatory compliance. Through these framings, political asymmetries become administratively rational, and spatial inequality becomes normalized.

To analyze how this process unfolds, the chapter examines Hebron through three analytical lenses. The first lens explores the criminalization of food production through permit regimes, plant protection laws, and agricultural access coordination. The second lens analyzes the fragmentation of market space in the Old City, particularly the disruption of commercial circulation through street closures and checkpoint infrastructure. The third lens examines how recurring narratives of security, environmental protection, and legality function as planning logics that legitimize spatial restriction.

Together, these lenses demonstrate how misinformation operates as spatial governance. By shaping the interpretive frameworks through which land regulation is understood, narrative framing stabilizes regulatory asymmetry and contributes to the restructuring of Hebron's food systems. In this sense, the governance of territory is inseparable from the governance of meaning. Planning authorities do not operate only through physical control of land and infrastructure, but also through narratives that define how spatial restrictions are interpreted and justified. As the following sections illustrate, security discourse, environmental protection rhetoric and legal framing reshape how agricultural access, mobility, and market activity are understood, allowing regulatory constraints to appear administratively necessary rather than politically constructed

4.1 Historical Context: Displacement, Land Transformation, and the Restructuring of Palestinian Space

The contemporary spatial and economic conditions of Hebron cannot be understood without situating them within the broader historical transformations that reshaped Palestinian territory during the twentieth century. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the war that accompanied it resulted in large-scale displacement of Palestinian populations and a fundamental reconfiguration of land ownership and settlement patterns across historic Palestine.

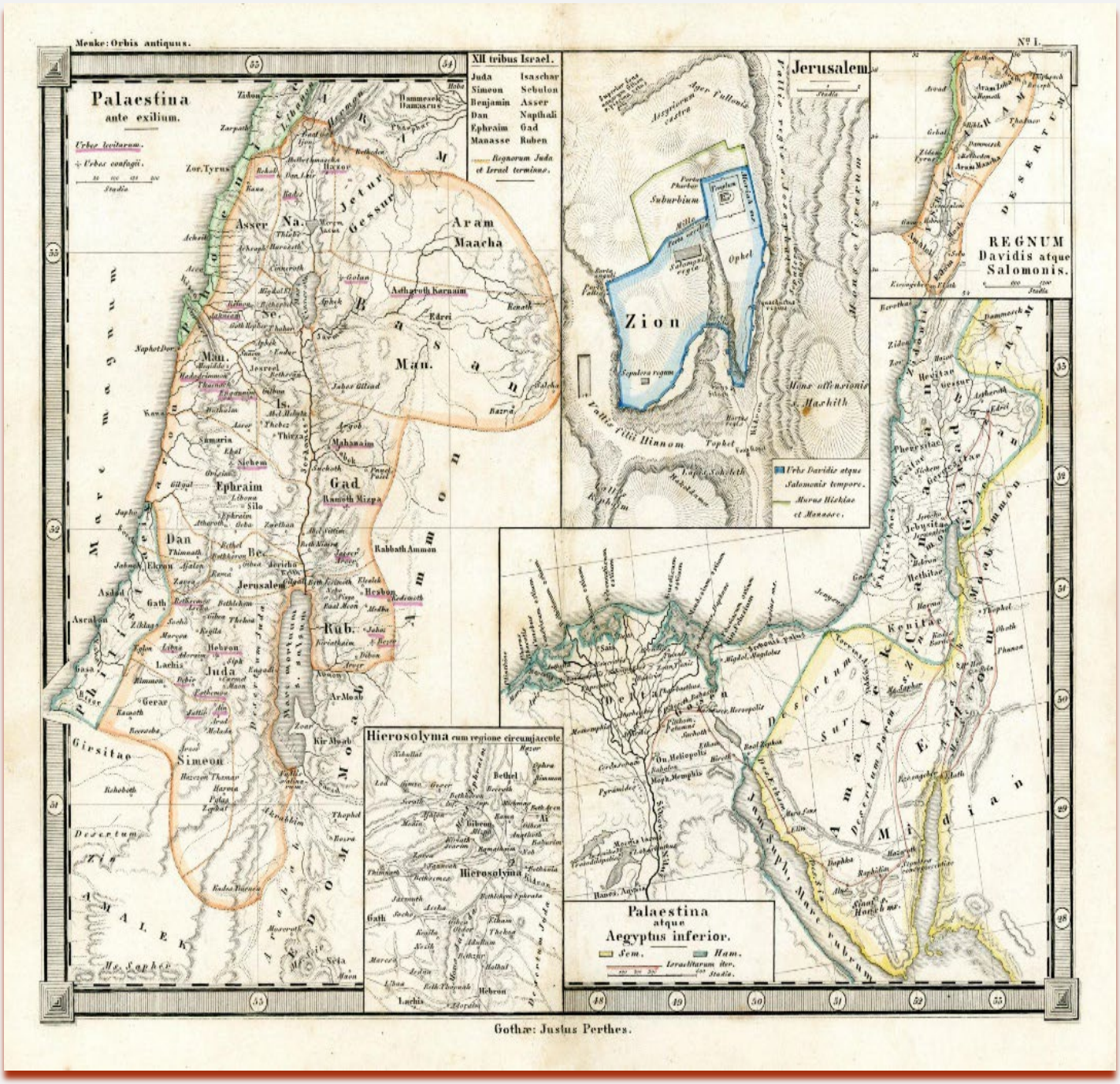


Figure 6 Historic Palestine prior to 1948. Source: British Mandate cartographic records / Khalidi (1992).

The map illustrates the territorial geography of Palestine during the late British Mandate period, showing major cities, towns, and regional connections prior to the territorial transformations that followed the 1948 war. Hebron appears as a major urban center in the southern highlands, historically connected to surrounding rural agricultural communities through regional trade and food systems



Figure 7:Palestinian displacement during the 1948 Nakba. Source: Adapted from Khalidi (1992); Palestine Open Maps; UNRWA.

the map illustrates major displacement routes of Palestinian populations during the 1947–1949 war and the locations of depopulated Palestinian villages. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes during this period,

many relocating to the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. These population movements fundamentally reshaped regional settlement patterns, land use, and agricultural production across historic Palestine.

Although Hebron itself came under Jordanian administration between 1948 and 1967 and was not incorporated into the newly established Israeli state, the regional effects of displacement were profound. Many Palestinian families expelled from villages in southern Palestine relocated to towns and refugee camps in the West Bank, including the Hebron region. These demographic shifts placed new pressures on land, housing, and employment while reshaping agricultural production and regional trade networks.

Following the 1967 war, Israel occupied the West Bank, including Hebron, introducing a system of military governance that significantly altered land administration. Through a series of military orders and planning regulations, Israeli authorities gained extensive control over land classification and development across the territory. Large areas of land were reclassified as state land, closed military zones, nature reserves, or settlement jurisdictions (Weizman, 2007). These administrative categories enabled the expansion of Israeli settlements and the development of infrastructure networks that reshaped patterns of mobility and land access throughout the West Bank.

Hebron today represents one of the most spatially fragmented urban environments in the occupied West Bank. The city is home to more than 215,000 Palestinians, while Israeli settlements have been established both around and within the city, including the large settlement of Kiryat Arba and several Israeli settler enclaves embedded inside Hebron's Old City (OCHA, 2023). These settlements are protected by a dense network of military checkpoints, surveillance systems, and restricted-access zones that significantly affect the movement, livelihoods, and economic life of Palestinian residents.

Settlement expansion and associated security infrastructure have also affected agricultural land surrounding Hebron. Areas historically cultivated for olive groves, grazing, and subsistence of agriculture have increasingly fallen within zones of restricted access, military control, or settlement jurisdiction. Palestinian farmers often require special permits to access land located near settlements or security zones, particularly during olive harvest seasons (OCHA, 2023). In some cases, agricultural land has been physically separated from villages by barriers, checkpoints, or settlement infrastructure. As a result, long-standing agricultural landscapes have been progressively transformed into contested spaces where cultivation, mobility, and land use are subject to administrative authorization.

Within the city itself, the presence of settlement enclaves and associated military infrastructure has reshaped urban commercial life. Movement restrictions, checkpoints, and surveillance systems structure daily circulation in Hebron's Old City, particularly in the H2 area where Israeli military authorities retain control. Markets that historically connected rural agricultural production with urban trade now operate within a fragmented spatial environment shaped by mobility restrictions and administrative regulation. These spatial conditions form the broader context within which Hebron's food systems, agricultural production, and market circulation are currently organized.

To understand how these conditions emerged, the following section traces the historical development of land governance and spatial regulation in Hebron across several key periods. These historical transformations illustrate how land governance, mobility restrictions, and settlement expansion have progressively reshaped the spatial foundations of Hebron's food system.

Period	Key Spatial Change	Impact on Agriculture
Pre-1948	Regional agrarian networks	Integrated rural–urban food systems
1948	Displacement and territorial restructuring	Refugee pressures on land and agriculture
1967	Israeli occupation	Military land classification and planning control
1997	Hebron Protocol (H1/H2 division)	Fragmentation of urban markets and mobility

Table 1:Key Historical Turning Points Affecting Land and Food Systems in Hebron. Source: Author

4.1.1 Pre-Ottoman Continuities: Agrarian Foundations

Long before the Ottoman Empire (1517–1917) formalized land tenure systems, Hebron functioned as an agrarian and trade center embedded within regional networks linking the southern Levant. Archaeological and historical records indicate continuous cultivation of olives, grapes, grains, and livestock production across centuries (Khalidi, 1997; Tamari, 2009). The city's location along historic trade routes allowed agricultural goods to circulate beyond local markets, integrating Hebron into a broader economic system.

Agriculture was not peripheral to Hebron's urban identity but foundational.ve groves and vineyards structured the surrounding landscape, and seasonal harvest cycles shaped urban rhythms. Food production was deeply embedded in social organization, religious practice, and land-based belonging (Khalidi, 1997; Tamari, 2009).

This long agrarian continuity is important for understanding the later emergence of spatial fragmentation. For centuries, agricultural production and urban markets functioned within relatively coherent territorial systems in which cultivation, trade, and mobility were tightly integrated. The severe regulatory fragmentation visible in Hebron today is therefore not historically inherent to the city's spatial organization. Rather, it emerged through successive layers of modern administrative restructuring that transformed how land, mobility, and agricultural practice are governed.

4.1.2 Ottoman Period (1517–1917): Land as Social Fabric

Under Ottoman rule, land in Palestine was governed through a layered tenure system formalized in the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. Land categories such as miri (state land leased for use), mulk (private land), and waqf (religious endowment land) structured ownership, taxation, and administration (Gerber, 1985; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007). These classifications

introduced a degree of administrative legibility for the Ottoman state while allowing local agricultural practices to continue within established social structures.

Despite the increasing bureaucratic documentation of land, agricultural production remained deeply embedded within village-based kinship networks and customary practice. In Hebron and its surrounding villages, olive cultivation and grape production formed the backbone of rural–urban exchange. Seasonal harvest cycles structured economic life, and land was understood not only as property but as part of social identity and family continuity (Tamari, 2009; Khalidi, 1997).

Urban markets in Hebron were tightly integrated with surrounding agricultural zones. Farmers transported olive oil, grapes, grains, and herbs into the Old City markets, where trade operated through longstanding social relationships linking rural producers, merchants, and religious institutions (Doumani, 1995; Tamari, 2009). Food was therefore not merely an economic commodity; it was tied to household survival, communal identity, and religious practice.

Importantly, although the Ottoman state regulated land primarily for taxation and administrative purposes, it did not impose the dense permit regimes, mobility restrictions, or fragmented jurisdictional authorities that characterize contemporary governance in the West Bank. Agricultural production and rural–urban trade networks operated within continuous territorial systems linking villages, fields, and urban markets (Gerber, 1985; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007; Doumani, 1995).

This relative continuity in land access and agricultural circulation highlights an important contrast with later periods. While the Ottoman system introduced administrative classification, it did not fragment territorial governance. Sive restructuring of land ownership, cadastral mapping, and regulatory authority would emerge during the British Mandate period, when modern land registration systems began to transform the relationship between territory, administration, and property.

4.1.3 British Mandate Period (1920–1948): Mapping, Registration, and Colonial Administration

The British Mandate period began when British forces captured Palestine from the Ottoman Empire in 1917. In 1920, the League of Nations formally granted Britain administrative authority over the territory, establishing the British Mandate (1920–1948). British governance introduced a new colonial administrative framework shaped partly by the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which supported the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine while affirming the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities (Khalidi, 1997; Tamari, 2009; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007).

The Balfour Declaration and subsequent British policies also coincided with increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine during the Mandate period. Several waves of immigration, often referred to as the Aliyot, brought Jewish migrants primarily from Europe and other regions to Palestine between the late nineteenth century and the late 1930s (Khalidi, 1997; Morris, 2001).

This chart illustrates major waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods. Immigration increased significantly during the 1920s and 1930s due to political developments in Europe and British immigration policies under the Mandate administration. These

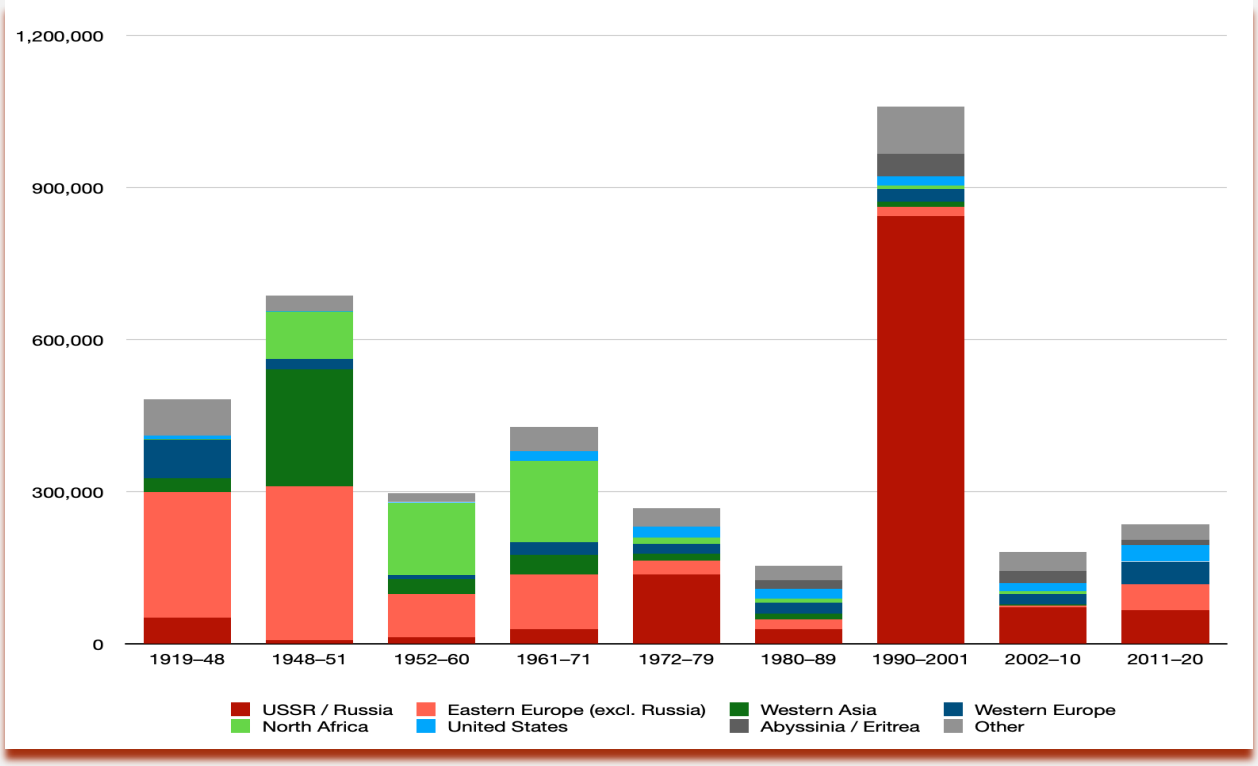


Figure 8:Jewish immigration to Palestine, 1880–1940 (Aliyah waves) Sources: Morris (2001); Khalidi (1997); Kimmerling & Migdal (2003).

demographic shifts contributed to changes in land ownership patterns, settlement development, and rural land use across Palestine.

British authorities facilitated immigration through administrative regulations and, in some cases, supported the establishment of Jewish institutions and agricultural settlements. Land acquisition occurred through a combination of legal purchases by Zionist organizations, including the Jewish National Fund, and the transfer of land from absentee landlords, which in some cases led to the displacement of Palestinian tenant farmers who had cultivated the land for generations (Khalidi, 1997; Pappé, 2006; Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003).

At the same time, the British Mandate introduced a unified legal status of Palestinian citizenship under the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order. This legal category applied to residents of the Mandate territory regardless of religious or ethnic background, meaning that Jewish immigrants who settled in Palestine could acquire Palestinian citizenship within the Mandate legal framework (Seikaly, 2015). As a result, both Arab and Jewish residents were formally classified as Palestinians under British administration, even though political tensions between the two communities intensified during the Mandate

period.. These developments contributed to significant transformations in land ownership patterns, demographic composition, and rural livelihoods across Palestine

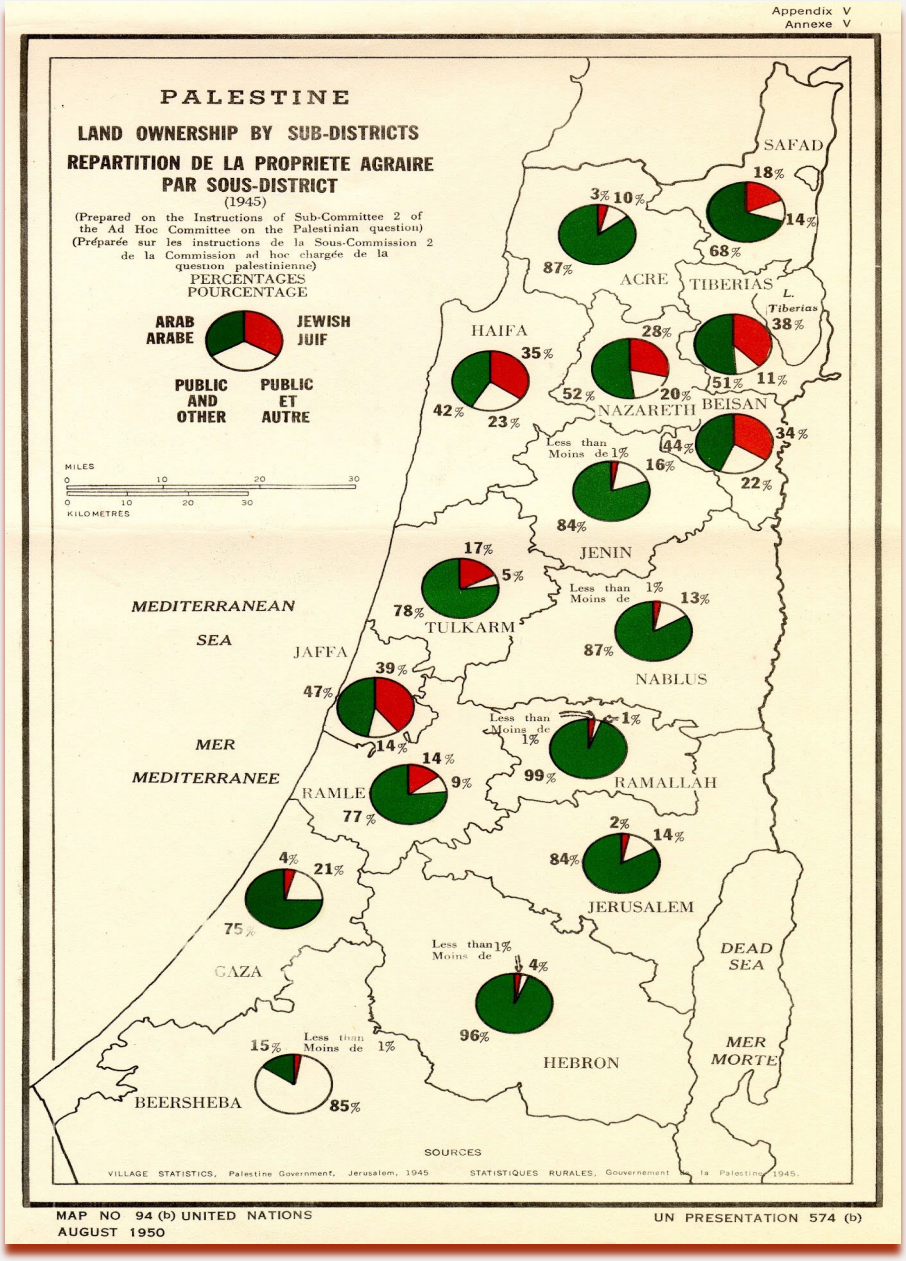


Figure 9:Land ownership distribution in Palestine before 1948. Sources: United Nations (1945); Khalidi (1997); Pappé (2006).

This map illustrates patterns of land ownership in Palestine during the final years of the British Mandate. Despite growing Jewish immigration and settlement development, the majority of land remained under Palestinian Arab ownership, with Jewish-owned land representing a smaller proportion of total territory.

One of the most consequential transformations during the Mandate period was the introduction of modern cadastral surveying, systematic mapping, and formal land registration. Through these administrative practices, land was rendered legible to colonial authorities. Mapping projects translated complex landscapes of customary use, kinship-based tenure, and seasonal cultivation into standardized parcels recorded in official registries (Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007).

This bureaucratic recording altered long-standing tenure relationships. Formal land registration sometimes displaces customary claims or required communities to translate informal land practices into documented ownership categories recognized by colonial administration. At the same time, British authorities expanded planning instruments such as zoning regulations, urban planning schemes, and administrative land classification systems. Land increasingly became an object of bureaucratic management, organized through mapped units governed by documentation and regulation.

In Hebron, Mandate governance intensified administrative oversight of land classification and urban infrastructure planning. Although the city remained Palestinian and its agricultural economy continued to rely heavily on olive cultivation and rural–urban exchange networks, the institutional frameworks through which land was defined and governed were changing. Agricultural land and urban property were more documented through cadastral surveys and planning records.

Colonial mapping and classification practices did more than document territory; they transformed how territory could be governed. As Scott (1998) argues, projects of state legibility simplify complex social landscapes to facilitate administrative control. In Palestine, cadastral mapping established institutional foundations that later planning regimes would build upon when restructuring territorial governance.

By the end of the Mandate period in 1948, land governance across Palestine had been significantly reorganized through mapping, documentation, and administrative classification. Although food production and rural–urban trade networks continued to function, the institutional infrastructure of land governance had deepened. Land was no longer governed primarily through customary continuity but increasingly through formal documentation and administrative categories.

4.1.4 1948 and the Reconfiguration of Territory

The 1948 war and the establishment of the State of Israel dramatically altered Palestinian geography and regional economic systems. Large-scale displacement reshaped settlement patterns, trade networks, and access to agricultural land across historic Palestine (Khalidi, 1992). Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced during the conflict, fundamentally transforming the spatial organization of Palestinian society.

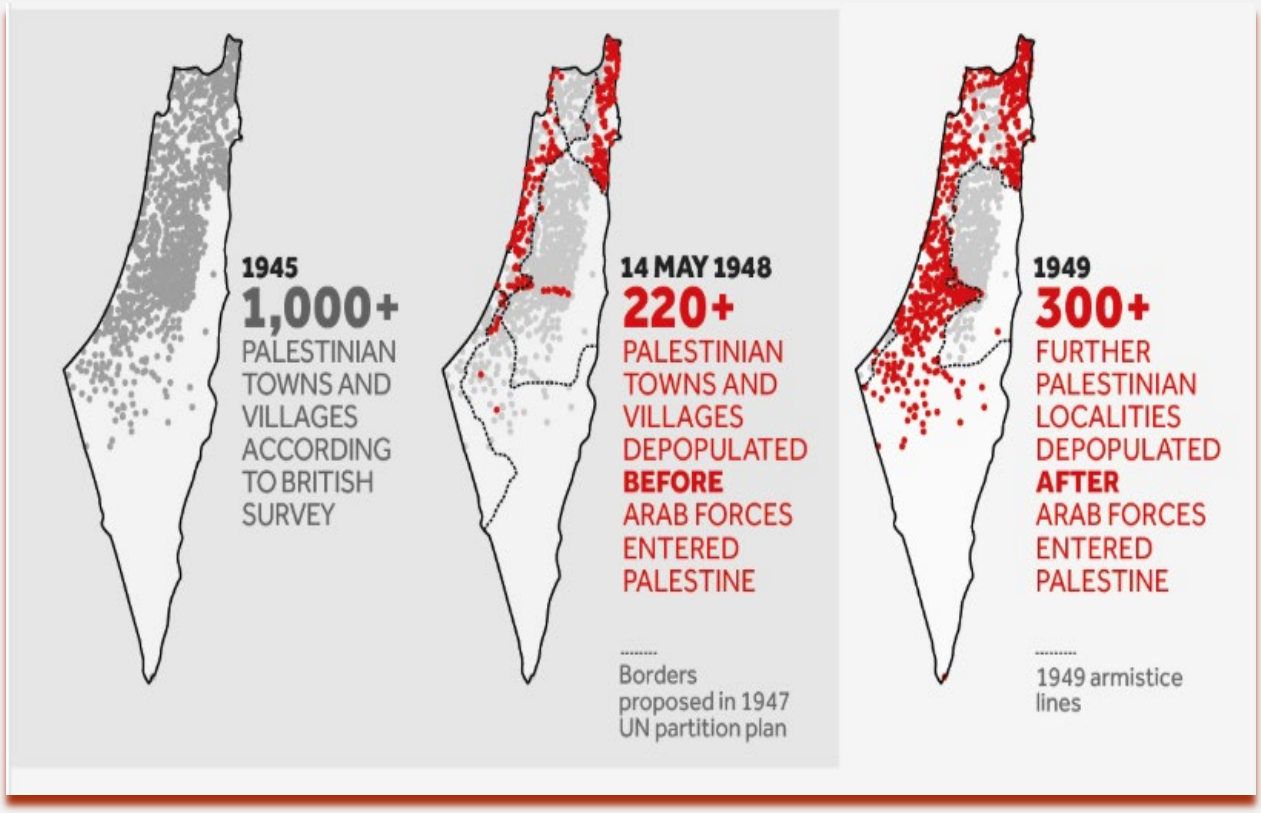


Figure 10:Depopulation of Palestinian towns and villages during the 1948 war.

As illustrated in Figure 4.5, the depopulation of hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages reshaped settlement patterns across the region, disrupting agricultural landscapes and long-standing rural–urban economic networks that had historically connected villages to cities such as Hebron. Source: Adapted from historical datasets on depopulated Palestinian localities (Khalidi, 1992; Palestine Open Maps)

Hebron fell under Jordanian administration between 1948 and 1967, remaining outside the newly established Israeli state. Nevertheless, broader territorial reconfiguration had significant consequences for the city's economic and spatial life. Regional trade routes were disrupted, and long-standing agricultural exchange networks linking Hebron with surrounding areas were altered by new political borders.

The arrival of refugee populations further reshaped demographic and economic conditions in the West Bank. Refugee camps established across the region introduced new pressures on housing, land access, and urban infrastructure. Refugee camps also generated distinct food economies shaped by population density, limited land access, and humanitarian assistance systems. In these spaces, household food access depended not only on local agricultural production but also on aid distribution, informal retail networks, remittances, and small-scale market exchange. Over time, refugee communities became integrated into surrounding urban economies while still relying on humanitarian food support during periods of crisis or movement restrictions. These dynamics reshaped patterns of food consumption, labor participation, and market demand

across the Hebron region (Seikaly, 2015; UNRWA, 2023; OCHA, 2023). Food systems are increasingly intersected with humanitarian relief and survival strategies, as displaced populations relied on both local agricultural production and international aid networks.

Although Hebron's agricultural economy continued to function during the Jordanian administration, the territorial restructuring that began in 1948 marked an important shift in the spatial organization of Palestinian life. Agricultural production, trade circulation, and urban markets were now shaped by newly imposed political boundaries.

In this sense, the 1948 period represents an early stage in the broader transformation of Palestinian territorial governance. While the administrative fragmentation that characterizes contemporary planning regimes had not yet fully emerged, the geopolitical restructuring of the region began to reshape how land, mobility, and economic exchange operated across Palestinian space.

4.1.5 1967 and the Onset of Occupation: Institutionalizing Asymmetry

The 1967 war marked a structural turning point in the governance of Palestinian territory. Following the war, Israel occupied the West Bank, including Hebron, and introduced a new administrative framework based on military authority. Existing legal and planning institutions were gradually replaced by a system governed through Israeli military administration.

Through a series of military orders issued after 1967, Israeli authorities gained extensive control over land classification and planning regulation in the West Bank. One of the most significant was Military Order 59 (1967), which established the Custodian of Government Property and enabled the reclassification of land under several administrative categories. Land could be designated as:

- state land
- closed military zone
- nature reserve
- archaeological site

These classifications carried important regulatory consequences (Weizman, 2007). Construction of homes, agricultural infrastructure, wells, storage facilities, and access roads increasingly required permits issued under Israeli administrative authority.

Permit systems became a central mechanism of land control within the West Bank planning regime. Under the Israeli Civil Administration, Palestinian communities were required to obtain formal permits for construction and agricultural development. In practice, however, Palestinian permit applications were rarely approved, particularly in areas later classified as Area C following the Oslo Accords (Bimkom, 2018; Weizman, 2007). Studies of permit applications during the 1990s and 2000s indicate that approval rates for Palestinian construction requests remained extremely low, leaving many communities with limited legal avenues to develop agricultural infrastructure necessary for sustaining rural livelihoods (B'Tselem, 2017).

As a result, farmers frequently constructed essential agricultural structures such as water cisterns, irrigation systems, storage facilities, and access roads without permits. Although these structures were often necessary for maintaining

agricultural production, they were considered unauthorized under the planning regime and therefore subject to demolition of orders issued by the Civil Administration (Weizman, 2007). Even when demolition was not immediately carried out, the possibility of enforcement created conditions of long-term uncertainty for farmers attempting to maintain agricultural production.

This period therefore institutionalized a form of regulatory asymmetry within the planning system. Planning authority over large areas of the West Bank was centralized under Israeli administrative control, while Palestinian communities faced significant restrictions in obtaining permits necessary for development or agricultural improvement (Yiftachel, 2009; Weizman, 2007). Although planning regulations formally applied across the territory, their implementation produced uneven outcomes. Israeli settlements experienced continuous infrastructure expansion, while Palestinian rural communities encountered regulatory barriers to construction and land use.

In this context, planning regulation functioned not only as a technical administrative procedure but also as a mechanism for shaping spatial hierarchy. Agricultural production continued, but it increasingly operated within conditions of bureaucratic uncertainty. Farmers cultivating olive groves, managing irrigation systems, or accessing grazing areas often encountered administrative barriers that required coordination with military authorities or approval through permit systems.

Land was no longer governed primarily through customary practices or social relationships; it had become administratively conditional. Agricultural continuity increasingly depends on regulatory approval and military coordination rather than solely on ecological conditions or traditional land use.

4.1.6 Oslo Accords (1990s): Formalizing Fragmentation

The Oslo Accords formalized territorial division in the West Bank through the classification of territory into Areas A, B, and C, each governed by different administrative arrangements. Area A was placed under Palestinian Authority civil and security control, Area B under Palestinian civil administration with shared Israeli security authority, and Area C remained under full Israeli civil and military administration. These territorial categories established a fragmented

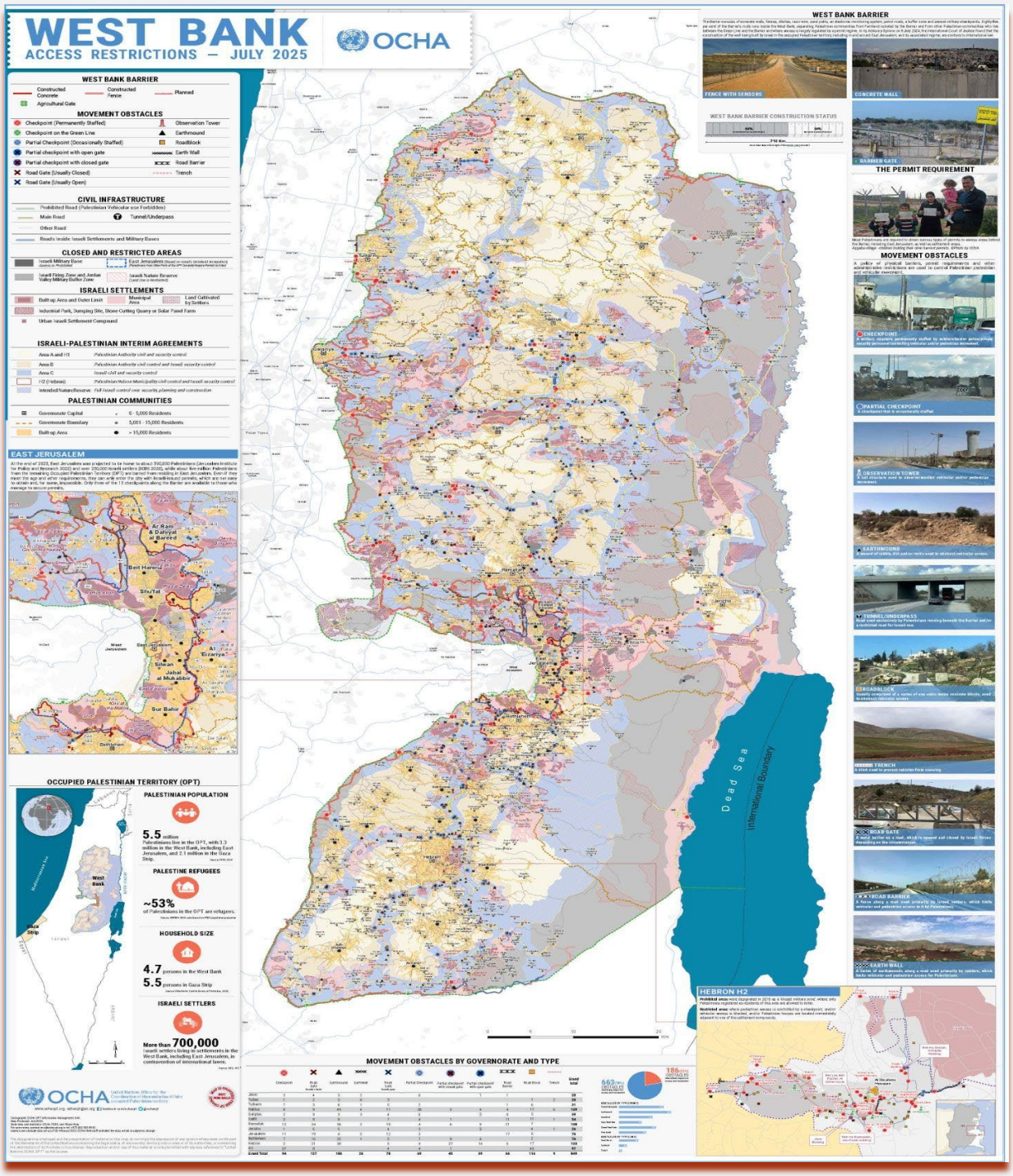


Figure 11: Administrative divisions of the West Bank following the Oslo II Accords. Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

governance structures across the West Bank, shaping how land use, infrastructure development, and Mobility would be regulated in subsequent decades. The result was a spatial landscape characterized by overlapping districts and uneven planning authority.

Figure 11 illustrates the administrative geography produced by the Oslo II agreement, showing the distribution of Areas A, B, and C across the West Bank. Rather than creating a continuous territorial entity, the agreement produced a patchwork of administrative zones that significantly influenced infrastructure planning, settlement expansion, and movement regulation.

Within this broader territorial framework, the city of Hebron received a distinct administrative arrangement under the 1997 Hebron Protocol. Unlike other West Bank cities, Hebron was divided internally into two governance zones known as H1 and H2. H1, comprising most of the urban area, was placed under Palestinian Authority administration. H2, which includes the historic Old City and areas surrounding Israeli settlements embedded within Hebron's urban fabric, remained under Israeli military control.

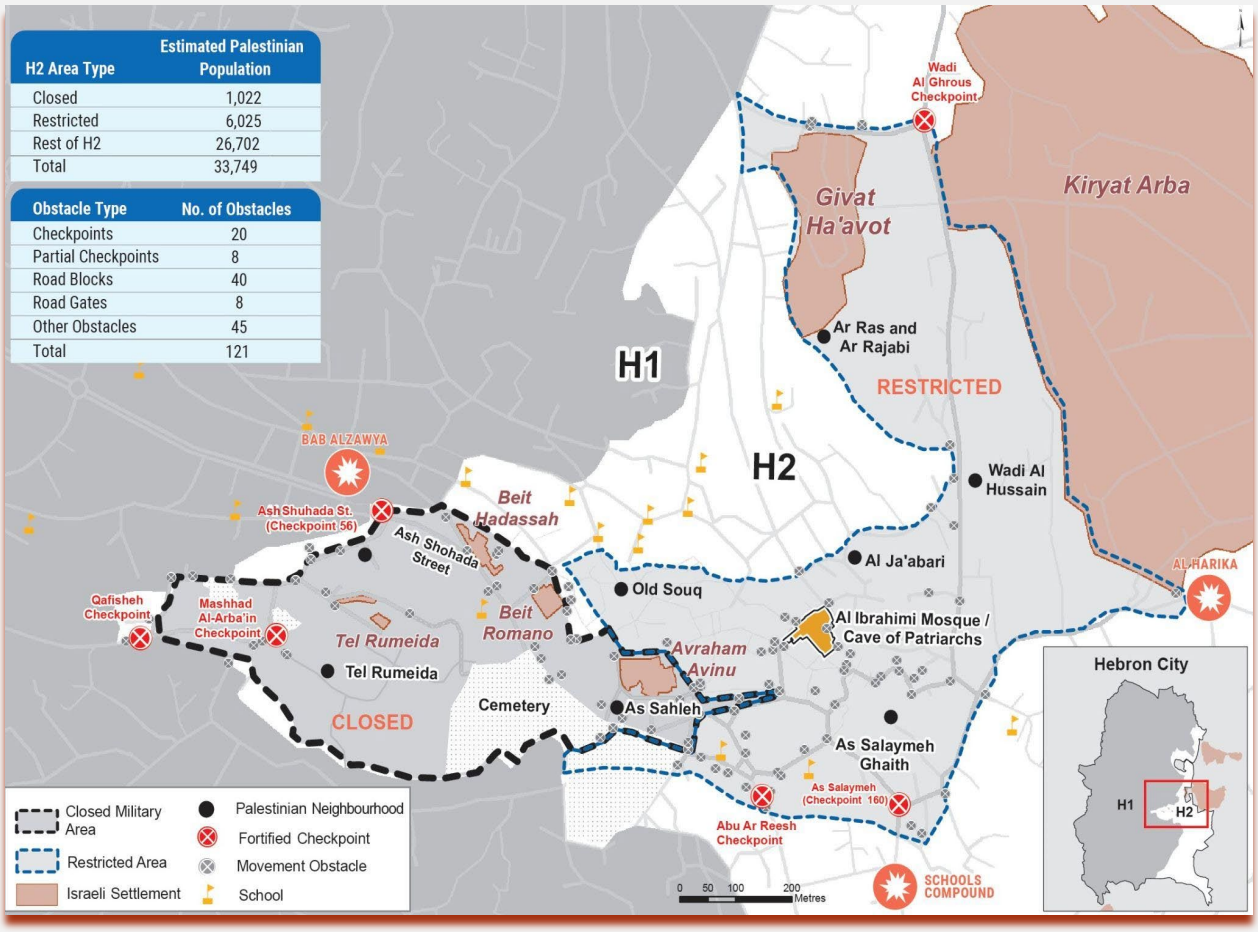


Figure 12: Administrative division of Hebron into H1 and H2 zones. Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The division institutionalized overlapping legal systems and fragmented sovereignty (Yiftachel, 2009). Movement restrictions intensified as Israeli authorities established checkpoints and controlled entry points within the H2 zone. Streets in the Old

City were closed to Palestinian vehicles and, in some cases, pedestrian access. Markets that once functioned as unified commercial corridors became segmented by mobility restrictions and surveillance infrastructure.

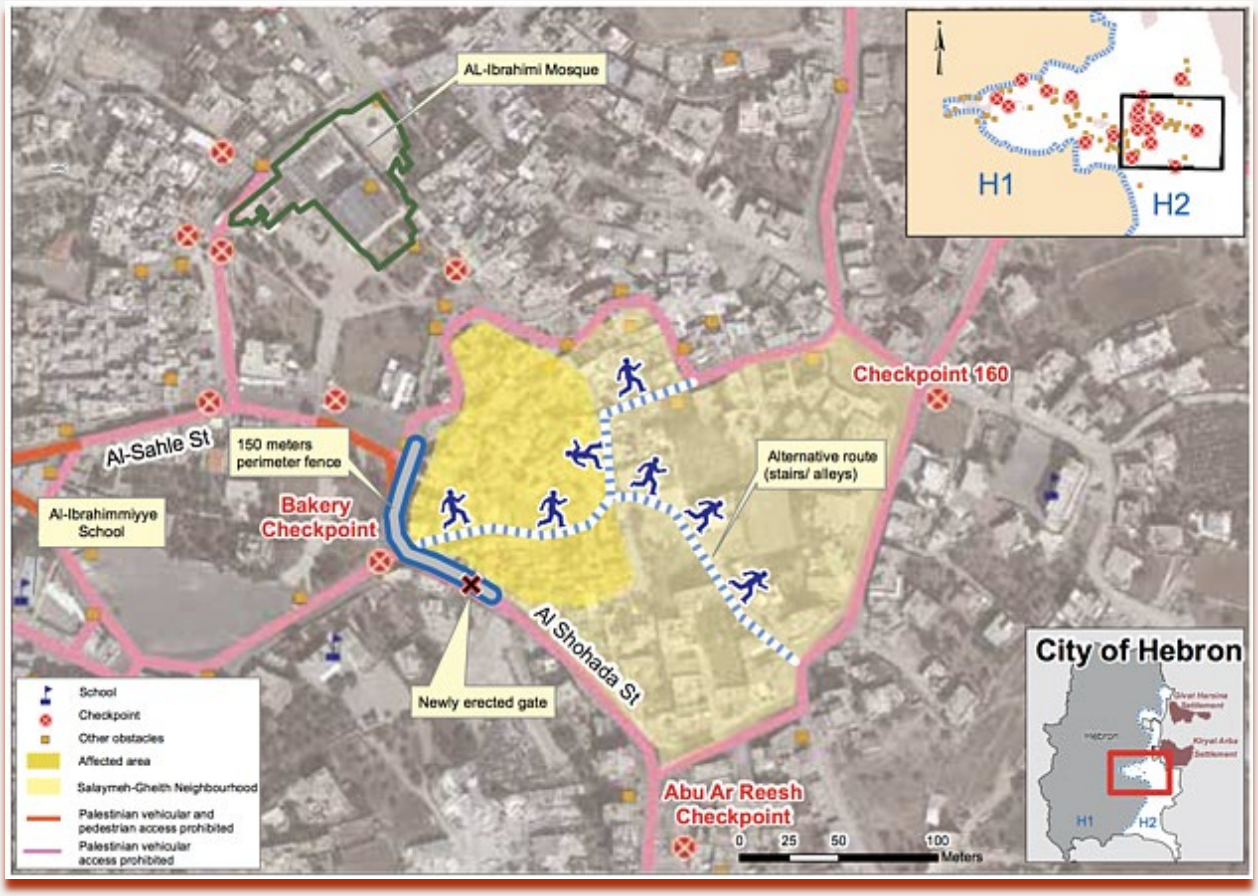


Figure 13:Movement restrictions and checkpoint infrastructure in Hebron's H2 area. Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; B'Tselem.

The map illustrates checkpoints, restricted roads, settlement compounds, and controlled access zones within the H2 area of Hebron's Old City. Following the 1997 Hebron Protocol, H2 remained under Israeli security and planning control. Movement restrictions concentrated around settlement enclaves restructure circulation patterns and fragment commercial activity within the historic market district.

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; B'Tselem.

One of the most widely documented examples is Shuhada Street, historically a central commercial artery in Hebron's Old City. Following security restrictions introduced in the mid-1990s and reinforced after the Hebron Protocol of 1997, large sections of the street were closed to Palestinian vehicles and, in some areas, pedestrian access. The restrictions led to the closure of hundreds of Palestinian shops and significantly reduced commercial activity in surrounding markets (Weizman, 2007; OCHA, 2023). Commercial decline followed restricted access. Economic stagnation was then often framed as evidence of inefficiency rather than a consequence of structural fragmentation.

Agricultural land in surrounding areas, particularly in Area C, remained subject to Israeli planning authority. Construction permits were required for agricultural infrastructure and were frequently denied (Bimkom, 2013). Olive groves near settlements became subject to restricted access periods, and harvest seasons often required military coordination

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Thus, the Oslo framework did not create fragmentation; it codified and bureaucratized it, embedding territorial division into everyday governance, infrastructure regulation, and urban planning practice.

4.1.7 Food Systems Under Fragmented Sovereignty

Hebron's contemporary food system reflects cumulative layers of governance:

- Ottoman tenure foundations
- Mandate cadastral legibility
- Post-1948 displacement
- Occupation-era military orders
- Oslo-era administrative fragmentation

This layered system produces regulatory precarity.

Yiftachel (2009) conceptualizes such spaces as gray spaces; areas suspended between legality and illegality, recognition, and exclusion. In Hebron, agricultural infrastructure may be considered unauthorized. Market access may depend on mobility permissions. Environmental or archaeological designations may restrict cultivation.

Food production and market exchange therefore operate within conditions of conditional legitimacy.

Narrative framing intersects directly with these legal structures. Agricultural expansion may be framed as unauthorized encroachment. Market density may be framed as disorder. Environmental classifications may frame land as protected rather than cultivated. For example, in the southern Hebron hills, areas designated as military training zones such as Firing Zone 918 have been framed as necessary for national security, even though these designations restrict Palestinian grazing lands and agricultural infrastructure in communities such as Masafer Yatta (OCHA, 2023; OCHA, 2024; Weizman, 2007)

Legality, therefore, is not purely technical. It is shaped through regulatory interpretation and narrative justification.

4.1.8 Why This Historical Depth Matters

Tracing Hebron's food system from Ottoman land tenure through Mandate cadastral mapping to occupation-era permit regimes reveals a central argument of this thesis: fragmentation is cumulative rather than sudden. Contemporary regulatory precarity did not emerge in isolation; it developed through successive layers of administrative restructuring, each redefining land, legality, and legitimacy in new ways.

First, fragmentation is cumulative. Each governing regime introduced new forms of classification, documentation, and territorial division. These layers did not replace one another cleanly; they accumulated, producing overlapping systems of authority. Second, regulatory precarity is structurally produced. The uncertainty surrounding agricultural permits, infrastructure approvals, and market access is not accidental. It is embedded in the legal architecture of occupation and fragmented sovereignty. Third, narrative justification operates within layered planning systems. Environmental designation, security framing, and claims of illegality do not arise in a vacuum. They attach to regulatory frameworks that already define certain spaces and populations as conditional.

This historical grounding allows the next sections to move beyond description and into analysis. The following sections examine how criminalization and legality shape food production, how market fragmentation reshapes economic continuity, and how security and environmental narratives justify land-use control. Through these lenses, Hebron demonstrates how narrative power becomes spatial governance.

These historical processes also reflect the three structural mechanisms of colonial spatial governance introduced in Chapter 2. Territorial legibility appears through cadastral mapping, land classification systems, and the administrative divisions of Hebron into H1 and H2 as well as the broader West Bank framework of Areas A, B, and C. Differential legality emerges through permit regimes, selective enforcement practices, and conditional agricultural access that distribute unevenly across space. Infrastructural power operates through checkpoints, road closures, surveillance infrastructure, and control over water and mobility networks. Together, these mechanisms produce the spatial conditions within which Hebron's food systems operate under occupation.

4.1.9 Contemporary Escalation: Occupation Policy, Settlement Expansion, and the Disruption of Pastoral Food Systems (2025–2026)

Recent developments in 2025–2026 demonstrate that the spatial dynamics described in this chapter are not limited to earlier phases of occupation but continue to evolve through new administrative measures, settlement expansion, and intensified pressure on Palestinian rural communities. These developments include the continued enforcement of demolition orders in pastoral villages, the expansion of Israeli settlement outposts across the South Hebron Hills, and the designation and enforcement of military training areas such as Firing Zone 918 that restrict Palestinian grazing and construction. These developments are particularly visible in the southern West Bank, including areas surrounding Hebron such as Masafer Yatta, where Bedouin and pastoral communities depend on livestock production, seasonal grazing, and small-scale agriculture for their subsistence and cultural continuity (OCHA, 2023; OCHA, 2024).

For centuries, pastoral and ago-pastoral communities in the southern Hebron hills have maintained livelihoods centered on sheep and goat herding. Livestock production in these areas is not merely an economic activity but a deeply embedded

system of land use, ecological knowledge, and cultural identity. Bedouin and rural Palestinian communities historically relied on seasonal grazing routes, rain-fed agriculture, and small-scale cultivation of grains, herbs, and olives. Sheep and goat herding provided meat, milk, yogurt, cheese, and wool, forming the foundation of household food systems and regional market exchange. These pastoral practices developed over centuries in close relationship with the semi-arid landscape of the southern West Bank. (Tamari, 2009; Khalidi, 1997).

Under conditions of Israeli military occupation, however, these pastoral food systems have become increasingly vulnerable to land access restrictions, settlement expansion, and regulatory intervention. In recent years, several Israeli government policies have expanded administrative control over land registration, planning authority, and environmental enforcement across the occupied West Bank. These measures strengthen Israeli institutional authority over land governance while further limiting Palestinian capacity to access, cultivate, or graze agricultural land (Weizman, 2007; Yiftachel, 2009).

The consequences of these policies are particularly visible in communities such as Masafer Yatta, a cluster of Palestinian villages located in the southern Hebron hills. Much of this area was designated by Israeli authorities as a military training zone during the 1980s, a classification that has been used to justify demolition orders, displacement pressures, and restrictions on construction and agricultural infrastructure. In 2022, the Israeli Supreme Court allowed the state to proceed with the eviction of Palestinian residents from parts of this area, arguing that the land had been legally designated as a firing zone 918. In the years that followed, humanitarian organizations documented continued demolitions, confiscation of structures, and increased pressure on residents to leave (OCHA, 2023; OCHA, 2024).

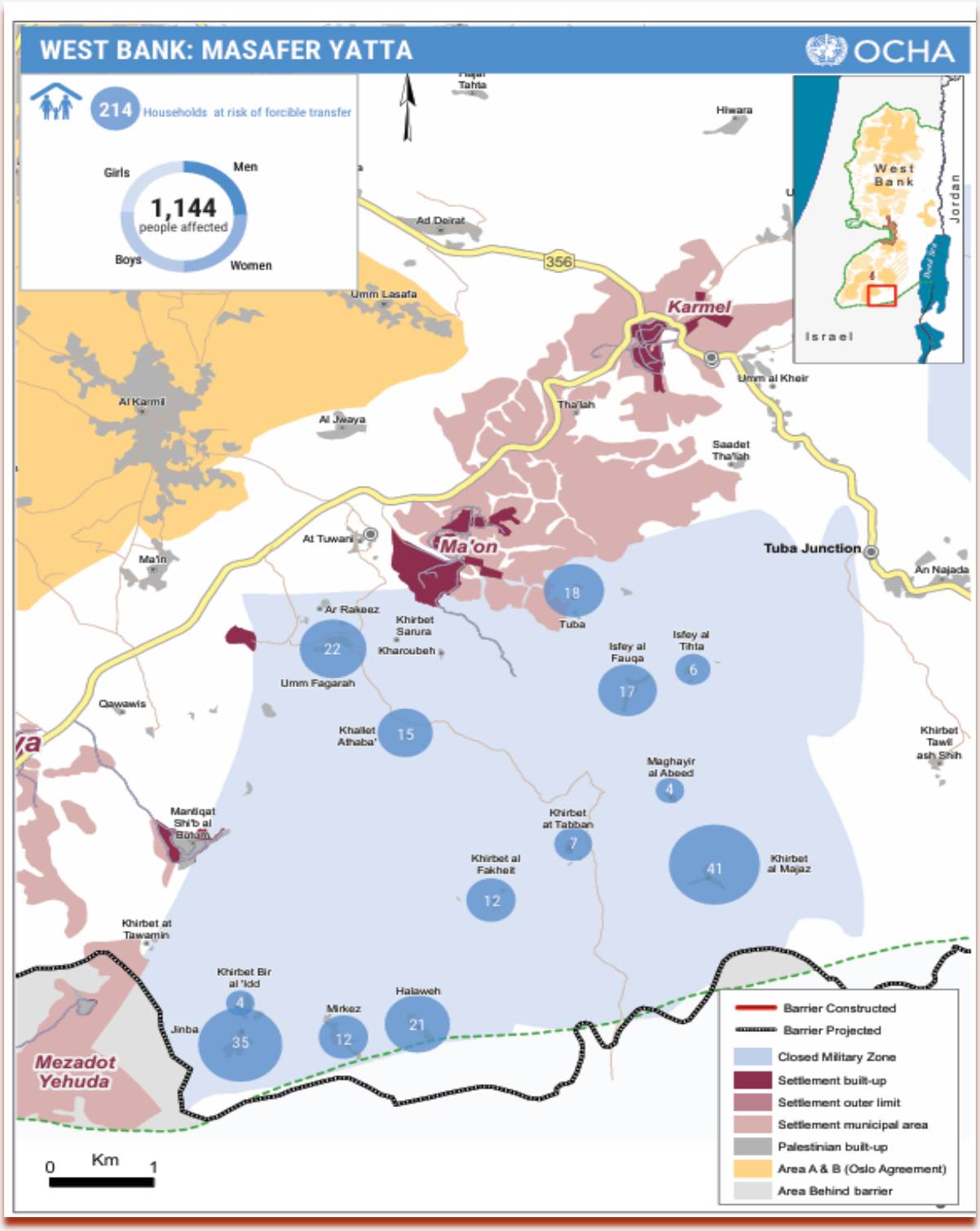


Figure 14:Masafer Yatta communities and Firing Zone 918 in the South Hebron Hills. Source: OCHA.

These policies directly affect pastoral food systems. When grazing land becomes restricted or militarized, herders lose access to traditional pasture routes that have historically sustained sheep and goat populations. Restrictions on water infrastructure, storage facilities, and agricultural buildings further undermine livestock management. For pastoral communities, whose livelihoods depend

on seasonal mobility across rangelands, the loss of access to grazing areas can rapidly destabilize food production. Families may be forced to reduce herd sizes, sell livestock prematurely, or abandon pastoral livelihoods entirely.

Settler expansion has intensified these pressures. In recent years, the establishment of informal settler outposts across the southern Hebron hills has further restricted Palestinian access to grazing land. Reports by humanitarian organizations and human rights groups have documented incidents in which settlers prevent Palestinian shepherds from accessing pasture areas, damage agricultural fields, or attack herders and livestock. Such incidents contribute to a broader environment of coercion in which pastoral life becomes increasingly difficult to sustain.

The result is a gradual transformation of food systems that have existed in the region for centuries. Sheep and goat herding, which once structured the rural economy of the southern Hebron hills, becomes progressively less viable when access to grazing land is restricted, and pastoral mobility is disrupted. Livestock loss, reduced milk production, and the inability to maintain stable herds affect both household food security and local market exchange. In this sense, the disruption of pastoral systems represents not only an economic challenge but also a transformation of cultural and ecological relationships to land.

These developments are frequently framed through narratives of security, environmental protection, or administrative legality. Military training zones are justified as necessary for national defense. Demolitions are framed as enforcement of planning law. Restrictions on grazing areas may be linked to environmental protection or land management policies. Yet these narratives often obscure the broader structural context in which Palestinian land access is systematically restricted while nearby settlements expand (Weizman, 2007; Yiftachel, 2009).

From the perspective of this thesis, such narrative framing illustrates how misinformation can operate within spatial governance. When structural land dispossession is reframed from neutral administrative procedure or security necessity, the political nature of territorial restructuring becomes obscured. Regulatory intervention appears technical and inevitable rather than contested and historically produced.

The situation in Masafer Yatta therefore reflects a broader pattern across the occupied West Bank: planning authority operates not only through permits, classifications, and infrastructure control but also through narratives that legitimize territorial restriction. For pastoral communities whose food systems depend on livestock grazing, the consequences are immediate and material. The loss of land access undermines sheep and goat herding, disrupts milk and meat production, and destabilizes centuries-old past pastoral practices.

Seen in this context, Hebron and the surrounding southern West Bank illustrate how food systems function as a barometer of spatial governance. When land access, grazing mobility, and agricultural infrastructure become restricted, the effects ripple through pastoral livelihoods and household food security. The transformation of these systems reveals how planning authority under occupation reshapes not only territory but also the everyday practices through which communities sustain themselves.

4.2 Lens One: Criminalization, Illegality, and the Regulation of Food Production in Hebron

Food production in Hebron does not operate within a neutral regulatory environment. It is embedded in a layered planning system shaped by colonial land classification, military administration, and contemporary permit regimes. Within this system,

agricultural activity is frequently framed through narratives of legality, security, and environmental protection. These narratives do not merely describe agricultural practice; they structure its possibility. In this sense, criminalization becomes a spatial tool.

Understanding how food production becomes vulnerable in Hebron requires examining three interrelated mechanisms, each of which is explored in the sections that follow:

(1) Agricultural Access Coordination and the Regulation of Olive Harvesting.

(2) The Criminalization of Wild Plant Harvesting, including Za'atar.

(3) Permit-Based Demolition and the Regulation of Agricultural Infrastructure.

Together, these mechanisms illustrate how regulatory precarity is sustained through narrative framing that legitimizes uneven spatial governance of agricultural activity.

4.2.1 Olive Harvest Coordination and Temporal Fragmentation

Olive cultivation is central to Hebron's agrarian economy and cultural identity. Olive trees often remain in families for generations, symbolizing continuity, land-attachment, and intergenerational inheritance (Tamari, 2009). Harvest season is both an economic necessity and a social ritual. Olive harvest in Hebron is also deeply gendered. Women play essential roles in harvesting, sorting, curing, pressing preparation, food preservation, and the social reproduction of agrarian knowledge across generations. When access to olive groves becomes restricted or harvest windows are shortened, the disruption affects not only farm income but also household food practices and women's labor within the broader agrarian economy. In this sense, mobility restrictions reshape both agricultural production and the gendered organization of food work

However, in areas located near Israeli settlements or classified under Area-C, access to olive groves frequently requires prior coordination with Israeli authorities. According to reports by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2023) and B'Tselem (2017), Palestinian farmers in certain areas must apply for limited harvest permits, particularly when land is located near settlement perimeters or designated security zones. Land access windows may be restricted to specific days, sometimes accompanied by military presence. In some documented cases, access has been denied entirely or shortened due to security concerns.

In addition to formal coordination regimes, Palestinian farmers may also face threats from settler violence during harvest periods. Humanitarian and human rights organizations have documented incidents in which settlers attack farmers, damage olive trees, or obstruct access to agricultural land near settlements (OCHA, 2023; B'Tselem, 2021; Yesh Din, 2020). These practices are distinct from formal planning procedures, yet they operate within the same territorial environment of asymmetrical control and often intensify the insecurity surrounding agricultural access.

This regulatory structure introduces what can be described as temporal fragmentation into agricultural life. Olive cultivation traditionally follows ecological cycles governed by rainfall, ripening patterns, and labor availability. Under coordination regimes, however, harvest timing becomes administratively scheduled. Agricultural rhythms are subordinated to security logic.

The justification for such coordination is typically framed in terms of preventing violence, protecting settlers, or maintaining public order. Security language dominates official explanations. Yet the effect is the reorganization of agricultural time. Farming becomes conditional, contingent upon approval and access. Food production becomes structurally uncertain.

Importantly, the narrative of security does more than authorize restrictions. It shapes public perception of agricultural space itself. When farmland is repeatedly associated with security threat zones, it is discursively transformed from productive landscape into risk terrain. This transformation allows restrictive measures to appear necessary rather than exceptional.

Within this system, food production becomes not simply regulated but narratively reframed. The olive grove shifts from being a site of cultural continuity and agricultural livelihood to a space interpreted through the language of surveillance, security risk, and potential threat. When farmland is repeatedly associated with security or framed as a site of disorder, its social meaning changes. Agricultural landscapes that historically support rural livelihoods become discursively recast as spaces requiring monitoring, coordination, or restriction.

Thus, misinformation and narrative distortion do not necessarily operate as viral falsehoods circulating independently from institutions. Rather, they often function through selective framing that legitimizes asymmetrical planning control. Security narratives emphasize threat while omitting the structural conditions that produce vulnerability, such as restricted land access, settlement expansion, or permit constraints. In doing so, these narratives reshape how agricultural space is interpreted by both administrators and the public.

Through repetition in official discourse, policy documents, and media narratives, such framing gradually normalizes regulatory intervention. Restrictions on agricultural access or harvesting practices appear as technical necessities rather than politically contested decisions. In this way, narrative framing contributes to the stabilization of unequal planning regimes by presenting spatial control as a rational response to risk rather than as a product of broader territorial governance.

4.2.2 Za’atar Regulation and Environmental Framing

A second site of regulatory criminalization involves the harvesting of wild za’atar, a plant deeply embedded in Palestinian culinary tradition. Za’atar (Origanum syriacum) is widely used in spice mixtures, particularly the herb blend known colloquially as “za’atar,” central to daily breakfast rituals. The plant holds not only nutritional value but cultural meaning. Olive harvesting in Hebron is also deeply gendered. Women play central roles in harvesting, sorting olives, preparing olives for pressing, preserving food products, and transmitting agricultural and culinary knowledge across generations. Their labor connects agricultural production to household food security through activities such as olive oil storage, food preservation, and preparation of traditional dishes. When access to olive groves becomes restricted or harvest windows are shortened, these disruptions affect not only farm income but also the gendered organization of household food work and cultural transmission (Tamari, 2009; Kanaaneh & Nusair, 2010; FAO, 2021).

Under Israeli environmental protection laws, wild harvesting of certain plant species, including za’atar, is restricted in designated areas. Environmental conservation discourse frames these restrictions as biodiversity protection measures (Braverman, 2009). In formal legal terms, the regulations are not explicitly ethnic or national in character; they are framed as ecological stewardship.

However, enforcement patterns operate within a broader regime of uneven sovereignty. In contexts where land governance is already asymmetrical, plant protection law intersects with occupation-era planning systems. The regulation of wild harvesting thus becomes embedded within larger territorial politics.

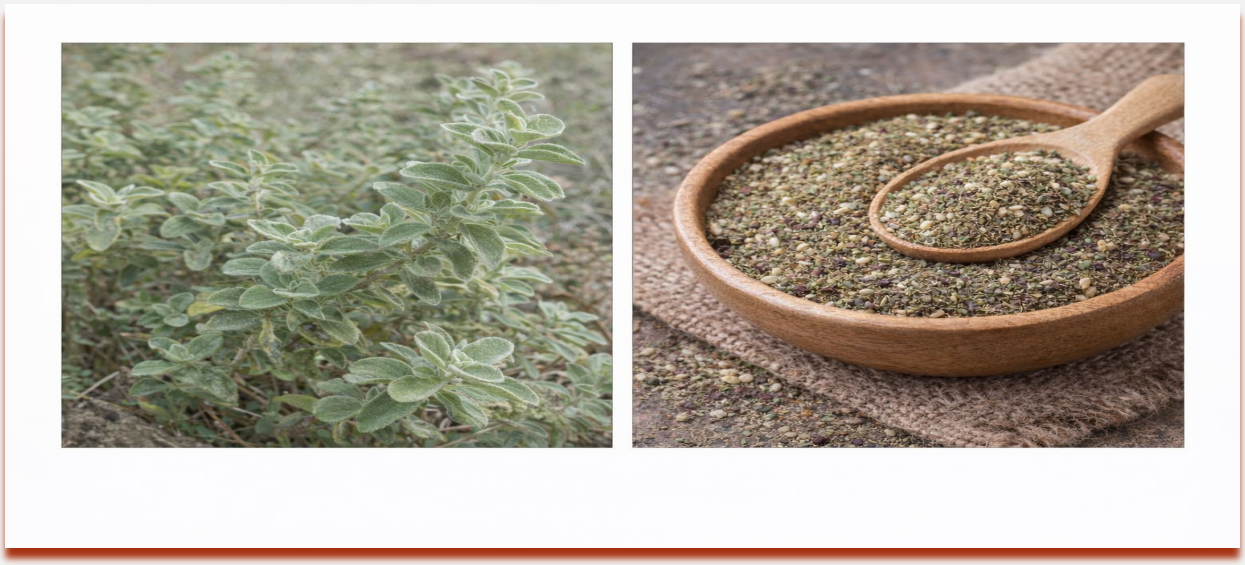


Figure 15:Za'atar plant and traditional spice mixture. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Wild za'atar (Origanum syriacum) is a native herb widely found across the Eastern Mediterranean and deeply embedded in Palestinian culinary traditions. The dried leaves are commonly used to prepare the spice mixture known as "za'atar," typically blended with sesame seeds, sumac, and salt and eaten with olive oil and bread.

The narrative structure here is significant. Environmental protection is politically neutral. It invokes global ecological values and scientific legitimacy. Yet when applied selectively within a contested landscape, conservation discourse can function as a mechanism of cultural restriction.

When harvesting za'atar becomes criminalized, everyday food practice is reclassified as a regulatory violation. Cultural continuity is reframed from environmental risk. This discursive shift allows enforcement to proceed under the language of sustainability rather than territorial control.

Again, the issue is not whether conservation law exists. It is how narrative framing legitimizes uneven application within a spatially fragmented governance system. Food practice becomes vulnerable when embedded within gray space, neither fully permitted nor fully recognized.

Yiftachel's (2009) concept of gray spaces is particularly useful here. Za'atar harvesting operates within zones of regulatory ambiguity, where enforcement may intensify or relax depending on political context. This ambiguity produces insecurity, discouraging practice even in the absence of consistent enforcement. The threat of illegality becomes spatially disciplining.

Thus, environmental narrative intersects with planning authority to regulate food practice.

4.2.3 Permit Regimes and the Demolition of Agricultural Infrastructure

A third mechanism shaping food production in Hebron involves the permit-based regulation of agricultural structures in Area C. Under current administrative arrangements, construction of water cisterns, storage facilities, fences, irrigation systems, and agricultural buildings requires approval from the Israeli Civil Administration (Bimkom, 2013; OCHA, 2023).

Studies of planning applications in Area C indicate that Palestinian permit approval rates remain extremely low. Between 2016 and 2018, for example, fewer than two percent of Palestinian building permit applications submitted to the Israeli Civil Administration were approved, while hundreds of demolition orders were issued for structures built without permits (B'Tselem, 2017; OCHA, 2023). As a result, many agricultural structures constructed without formal authorization become subject to demolition orders.

Humanitarian monitoring organizations have documented the ongoing demolition of agricultural infrastructure across Area C, including water cisterns, irrigation systems, and storage facilities essential for farming (OCHA, 2023). Although these structures are often necessary for sustaining agricultural production, they are treated within the planning system as unauthorized development. Water governance is a critical dimension of this regulatory system. In the semi-arid environment surrounding Hebron, agricultural viability depends heavily on cisterns, wells, irrigation systems, and water storage facilities. When these infrastructures require permits that are rarely granted, water access itself becomes administratively conditional. Restrictions on water infrastructure therefore influence what crops can be cultivated, how much land can be farmed, and whether livestock grazing remains viable. Control over water resources thus becomes an indirect mechanism through which agricultural production and food security are regulated under conditions of occupation (Selby, 2013; Zeitoun, Messerschmid & Attili, 2009; OCHA, 2023).

Formally, legal framing is administrative: construction without a permit violates planning law. Yet this framing exists within a broader context in which access to permits is highly restricted. When authorization mechanisms are systematically constrained, illegality becomes structurally produced rather than accidental.

This dynamic reveals how regulatory systems and narrative framing intersect. The language of "unauthorized building" implies non-compliance with planning rules. However, when pathways to legal authorization are extremely limited, such violations become predictable outcomes of the regulatory structure itself.

Food production infrastructure therefore becomes vulnerable to removal not because it lacks necessity but because it lacks formal recognition. Farmers operate within a system where investment in agricultural infrastructure carries the risk of demolition. Over time, this produces what may be understood as a form of regulatory erosion of agricultural viability.

In this context, illegality functions not only as a legal designation but also as a narrative tool. By framing agricultural structures as unauthorized or informal, demolition can be justified as routine enforcement rather than as a process contributing to land dispossession. Planning authority thus appears technical and rule-based, even when regulatory access remains deeply asymmetrical.

4.2.4 Criminalization as Spatial Governance

Taken together, harvest coordination, plant protection regulation, and permit-based demolition illustrate how food production in Hebron operates within a matrix of conditional legality. Agricultural practice is not prohibited outright; rather, it is rendered precarious through layered regulatory mechanisms.

Different narrative frameworks justify these interventions.

Security narratives legitimize restrictions on agricultural access and harvest coordination.

Environmental narratives frame control plant harvesting as biodiversity protection.

Administrative legality narratives justify demolition of agricultural infrastructure constructed without permits.

Together, these forms of narrative justification transform unequal regulatory conditions into reasonable land management practices. Through administrative discourse, agricultural precarity becomes normalized within planning systems.

The cumulative effects are spatial as well as economic. Food production becomes temporally unstable, spatially fragmented, and infrastructurally insecure. Farmers must navigate unpredictable access to land, limited harvesting windows, and the persistent risk that agricultural infrastructure may be removed through regulatory enforcement.

Importantly, these dynamics align directly with the central research question of this thesis. Misinformation does not appear only as viral digital falsehood circulating through social media networks. Rather, it can operate through institutional framing mechanisms that reinterpret agricultural space as zones of risk, illegality, or environmental threat. When such narratives become embedded within planning discourse, they shape how land is governed and how regulatory interventions are justified.

In Hebron, criminalization is therefore not only punitive; it is spatially productive. It reorganizes where food can be grown, when agricultural practices can occur, and whether the infrastructure supporting cultivation can persist. Through narrative justification embedded within planning authority, misinformation becomes a mechanism of spatial governance.

4.3 Lens Two: Market Fragmentation and the Spatial Disruption of Economic Continuity

If Lens One examined the criminalization of food production, Lens Two examines the spatial fragmentation of food circulation. Markets are not merely economic sites; they are infrastructural nodes linking rural production to urban consumption. In Hebron, the Old City market historically functioned as a central commercial corridor integrating agricultural goods from surrounding villages with urban exchange networks. The fragmentation of this market reveals how planning authority, mobility control, and narrative framing intersect to restructure economic geography.

Market decline in Hebron is often described as the unintended consequence of prolonged conflict. However, when examined through a planning lens, fragmentation emerges as the outcome of layered spatial decisions: street closures, checkpoint placement, surveillance infrastructure, and differential access regimes. These interventions reshape commercial continuity.

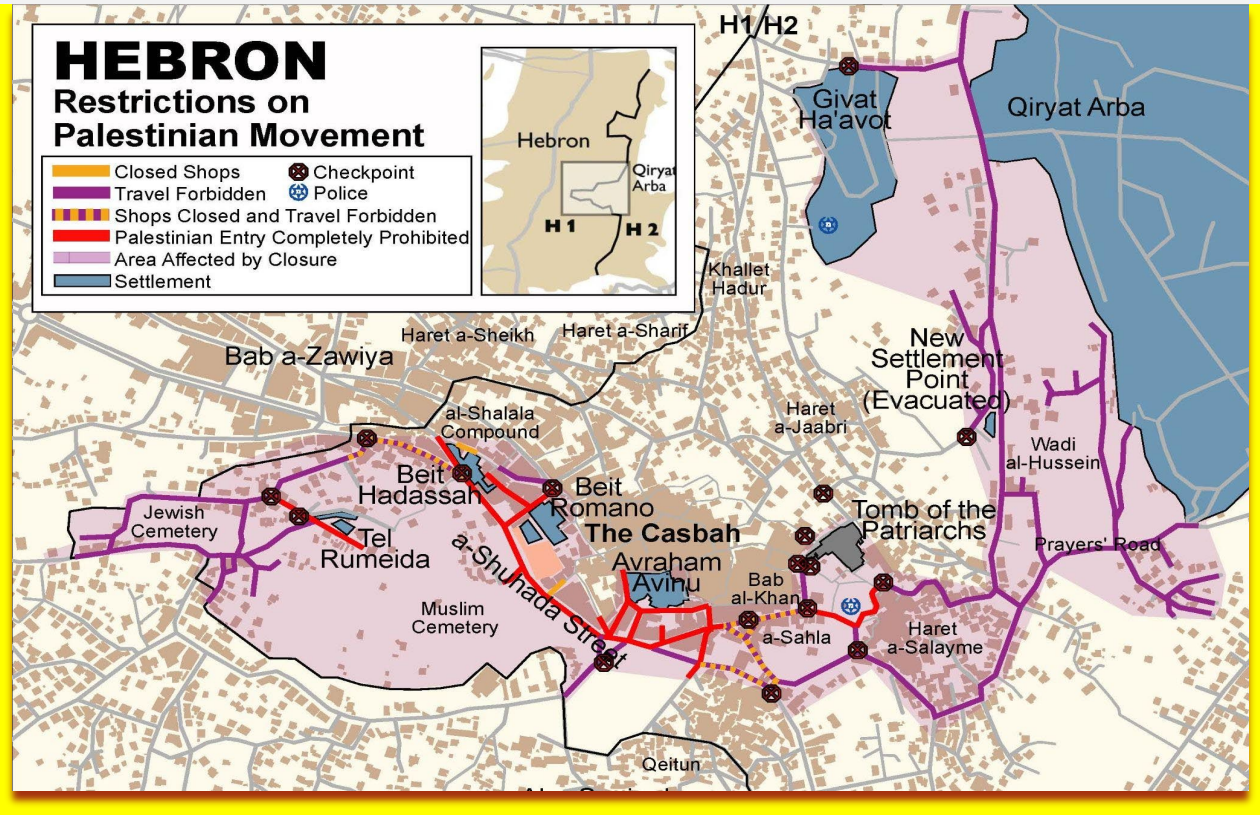


Figure 16: Restrictions on Palestinian movement in Hebron city center, including Shuhada Street. Source: B'Tselem (2017), Restrictions on Movement in Hebron's City Center.

4.3.1 Shuhada Street and the Closure of Commercial Corridors

Shuhada Street, once a central artery of Hebron's Old City for commercial life, provides a concrete spatial example of market fragmentation. Following the 1994 massacre at the Ibrahimi Mosque and subsequent security measures, large portions of Shuhada Street were closed to Palestinian vehicular traffic and, in some sections, to pedestrian access (B'Tselem, 2019; OCHA, 2023).

The street's closure did not simply reduce traffic flow. It severed commercial linkages. Businesses along the corridor were forced to shut down because accessibility had been removed. Over time, storefronts were sealed, welded shut, or left vacant. Economic vitality shifted toward H1 areas under Palestinian Authority administration, leaving H2 increasingly hollowed.

From a planning perspective, street closure functions as a land-use intervention. Mobility is an infrastructure. When mobility is restricted, economic geography is reorganized. The narrative justification for these closures is consistently framed in terms of security necessity. Protection of nearby Israeli settlements embedded within Hebron's Old City is cited as the rationale.

However, security framing also produces discursive effects. When commercial corridors are repeatedly described as volatile or dangerous, decline can be interpreted as natural rather than structurally induced. Economic collapse becomes evidence of dysfunction rather than evidence of restriction.

This narrative inversion is critical. It demonstrates how spatial control can be legitimized through discourse. Planning decisions that produce fragmentation are normalized through security rhetoric.

4.3.2 H1/H2 Division and Segmented Commercial Space

The Oslo Accords formalized Hebron's division into H1 (Palestinian Authority control) and H2 (Israeli military control). The Old City market lies within H2. This division created a bifurcated governance system within a single urban fabric.

Checkpoints regulate movement between zones. Surveillance cameras, military observation posts, and physical barriers shape circulation patterns. According to OCHA (2024), restrictions intensified following October 2023, with additional checkpoints and roadblocks affecting pedestrian and commercial movement.

For food markets, segmentation disrupts supply chains. Vendors rely on predictable access for transporting produce, grains, spices, dairy products, and other goods from surrounding villages. When checkpoint delays increase or closures intensify, supply becomes unstable.

In addition to commercial supply disruptions, humanitarian food assistance has become an increasingly critical component of food access in parts of the West Bank during periods of intensified movement restriction and conflict. International organizations and local aid networks provide emergency food distributions and support to vulnerable households when market circulation is disrupted (OCHA, 2024; WFP, 2023). However, humanitarian aid operates as a compensatory mechanism rather than a structural solution. While food assistance can temporarily stabilize household consumption, it does not address the underlying spatial constraints affecting agricultural production, market access, and circulation of goods. As a result, humanitarian interventions coexist with, rather than resolve, the structural fragmentation shaping Hebron's food system. These dynamics are especially significant for refugee communities, where household food access may depend on a fragile combination of local markets, aid provision, and informal neighborhood exchange.

The economic consequences are cumulative. Reduced foot traffic discourages investment. Business closures further reduce vitality. Decline then reinforces perceptions of instability.

From a planning theory perspective, this dynamic reveals the fragility of deliberative ideals under conditions of fragmented sovereignty. Healey (1997) conceptualizes planning as collaborative governance shaped through shared meaning-making. Yet in Hebron's H2, governance operates through unilateral military-administrative control rather than participatory negotiation.

Forester (1999) emphasizes that planners mediate knowledge and power within communicative arenas. In Hebron, however, commercial regulation occurs within military frameworks where communicative mediation is structurally constrained.

Thus, market fragmentation illustrates a breakdown of deliberative planning assumptions. Governance is exercised through control rather than negotiation.

4.3.3 Economic Decline, Narrative Framing, and the Politics of Disorder

An important dimension of market fragmentation is how decline becomes narratively mobilized. Vacant storefronts reduced pedestrian presence, and economic stagnation may be interpreted as indicators of disorder or instability. Such interpretations can reinforce security narratives.

This creates a recursive loop:

- Restriction produces a decline.
- Decline is cited as evidence of volatility.
- Volatility justifies further restrictions.

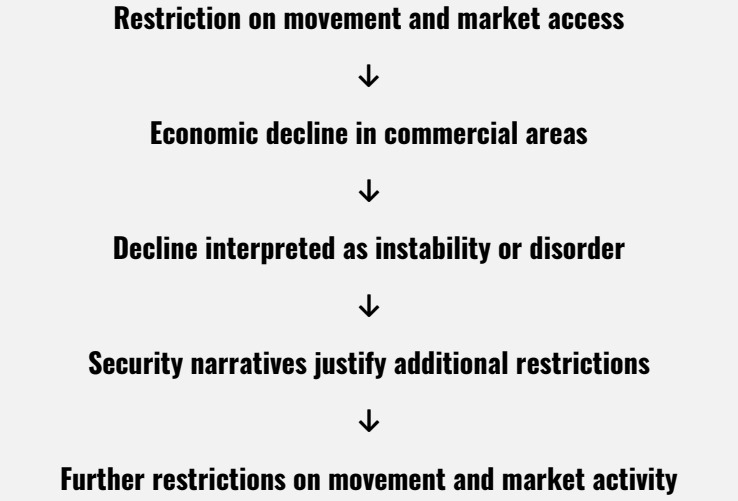


Figure 17: Recursive cycle linking movement restrictions, economic decline, and security narratives in Hebron's commercial districts. Source: Author

In this loop, spatial outcome reinforces discursive framing.

Roy (2005) argues that informality and illegality are often produced by planning systems themselves. In Hebron, commercial stagnation may be framed as market weakness rather than as the outcome of restricted mobility. This misrecognition obscures the regulatory origin of decline.

Similarly, Watson (2009) emphasizes that planning in contexts of deep inequality must grapple with fragmented governance rather than assume coherent institutional authority. Hebron exemplifies fragmented sovereignty in which overlapping jurisdictions produce uneven economic rights.

The political geography of H2 demonstrates how narrative and infrastructure interact. Surveillance technologies, street closures, access controls, and checkpoint systems are spatial design decisions. They shape where food can circulate and where markets can survive.

The political geography of H2 demonstrates how narrative and infrastructure interact in shaping everyday urban life. As discussed earlier in this chapter, planning authority in Hebron operates through layered mechanisms including land classification, permit regimes, and mobility restrictions. Surveillance technologies, street closures, access controls, and checkpoint systems function not only as security instruments but also as spatial design decisions that reorganize the urban

landscape. These infrastructures regulate circulation, determining which routes remain open for commercial activity, and which areas become economically isolated.

For food markets, these spatial interventions are particularly consequential. Vendors rely on predictable mobility corridors to transport produce, grains, spices, and dairy products from surrounding villages into the Old City. When checkpoints delay movement or streets are closed, supply chains become unstable and market activity declines. Over time, these infrastructural constraints reshape economic geography, concentrating commercial activity in areas with easier access while contributing to stagnation in restricted zones. In this way, the spatial organization of infrastructure directly structures the viability of urban food systems.

4.3.4 Intensification in 2023–2024

Developments during 2023–2024 further intensified market precarity in Hebron. Following the escalation of violence in October 2023 associated with the war in Gaza, Israeli authorities increased roadblocks, checkpoint closures, and movement restrictions across the West Bank, including Hebron governorate. Reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2024) document how these measures disrupted commercial transport routes and delayed the circulation of goods between rural producers and urban markets.

In Hebron's Old City, reduced mobility compounded existing economic fragility. Limited access between surrounding villages and urban commercial centers contributed to declining market activity, reduced customer presence, and further contraction of commercial space within already vulnerable market districts.

These developments also illustrate how crisis narratives can expand planning authority. In Hebron's H2 area, planning authority operates through a layered governance structure involving the Israeli Civil Administration, military authorities responsible for security coordination, and regulatory frameworks governing land use and construction permits. During periods of escalation, security framing increasingly dominates public discourse, and emergency conditions normalize exceptional regulatory measures.

From the perspective of misinformation scholarship, emotionally charged crisis narratives can suppress deliberation and reduce public contestation of regulatory expansion (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). When fear becomes dominant within public discourse, extraordinary governance practices may appear necessary or inevitable.

Developments during 2023–2024 therefore demonstrate that market fragmentation is not a static condition but a dynamic process that intensifies during periods of crisis. Increased checkpoint closures, surveillance practices, and mobility restrictions further disrupted circulation between rural producers and urban markets, deepening the spatial fragmentation of Hebron's food economy. In this sense, crisis conditions do not merely interrupt economic activity; they reinforce the infrastructural mechanisms through which spatial governance reorganizes everyday urban life.

4.3.5 Market Fragmentation as Spatial Governance

Market fragmentation in Hebron illustrates how planning authority extends beyond formal zoning documents. Spatial governance operates through a range of infrastructural and administrative mechanisms that structure everyday circulation within the city. These mechanisms include:

- street design and controlled pedestrian routes
- mobility restrictions and permit-based movement systems
- checkpoint placement regulating entry into commercial zones
- surveillance infrastructure monitoring circulation
- administrative segmentation between H1 and H2 governance regimes

Together, these interventions restructure patterns of food circulation across the urban landscape. Agricultural products, spices, grains, and other goods that once moved fluidly between surrounding villages, and Hebron's Old City markets now encounter multiple barriers of delay, inspection, and restricted access. As a result, market networks have become fragmented.

Importantly, this fragmentation operates not only at the level of infrastructure but also at the level of perception and economic expectation. Markets shrink not only physically but symbolically. Vacant storefronts, reduced foot traffic, and declining commercial activity can be interpreted as indicators of instability or economic weakness, even when these conditions are produced by spatial restrictions rather than by market failure.

Yiftachel's (2009) concept of gray space helps illuminate this condition. Commercial zones within H2 exist in a state of suspended viability: permitted yet restricted, open yet difficult to access. Businesses are not formally prohibited, but their continued operation depends on navigating unpredictable mobility regimes and regulatory constraints. Economic activity therefore persists within conditions of permanent uncertainty.

This dynamic speaks directly to the central research question of the thesis. Misinformation and narrative framing function as forms of power when they legitimize restrictive spatial interventions. Security discourse frames closures and checkpoints as necessary protective measures, while narratives of disorder or instability may attribute economic decline to internal market weakness. In this way, structural restrictions become reinterpreted as natural economic conditions outcomes.

Market fragmentation therefore demonstrates how narrative and infrastructure operate together as mechanisms of spatial governance. Through the interaction between mobility restrictions, surveillance systems, and dominant narratives of security and disorder, food systems are reorganized across urban space. Economic decline can then be interpreted as evidence of market fragility rather than as the product of infrastructural control.

4.4 Lens Three: Security and Environmental Narratives as Planning Logic

If criminalization structures food production and fragmentation restructures markets, narrative framing provides the legitimizing logic through which these processes become normalized. In Hebron, planning authorities do not operate independently of discourse. Rather, regulatory intervention is embedded within recurring narrative frameworks, most prominently security, environmental protection, and legality. These narratives do not merely describe spatial conditions; they structure the interpretation of space itself. In doing so, they function as instruments of governance.

This section argues that security and environmental discourse operate as planning logics. They translate political authority into spatial regulation while rendering that regulation administratively rational and publicly defensible.

4.4.1 Security as Spatial Justification

Security is the dominant narrative through which spatial restriction in Hebron is justified. Movement controls, surveillance infrastructure, street closures, agricultural access coordination, and market segmentation are consistently framed as necessary responses to threat prevention.

Security discourse is powerful because it carries moral urgency. It positions regulatory action as protective rather than coercive. Within this framing, checkpoints are not barriers but safeguards; closures are not exclusions but preventative measures.

Planning scholarship has long acknowledged that spatial governance often emerges from political crises (Porter, 2010). Yet in Hebron, security framing extends beyond moments of acute violence. It becomes a persistent organizing logic shaping everyday mobility and land-use administration.

The closure of Shuhada Street, for example, is maintained under ongoing security rationale (B'Tselem, 2019). Similarly, agricultural coordination requirements are justified as protective measures near settlement perimeters (OCHA, 2023). Even environmental enforcement can intersect with security zones. The physical manifestation of this security infrastructure is visible in the Old City market corridors, where protective netting has been installed above pedestrian routes to shield vendors and shoppers from objects thrown from settlement areas above.

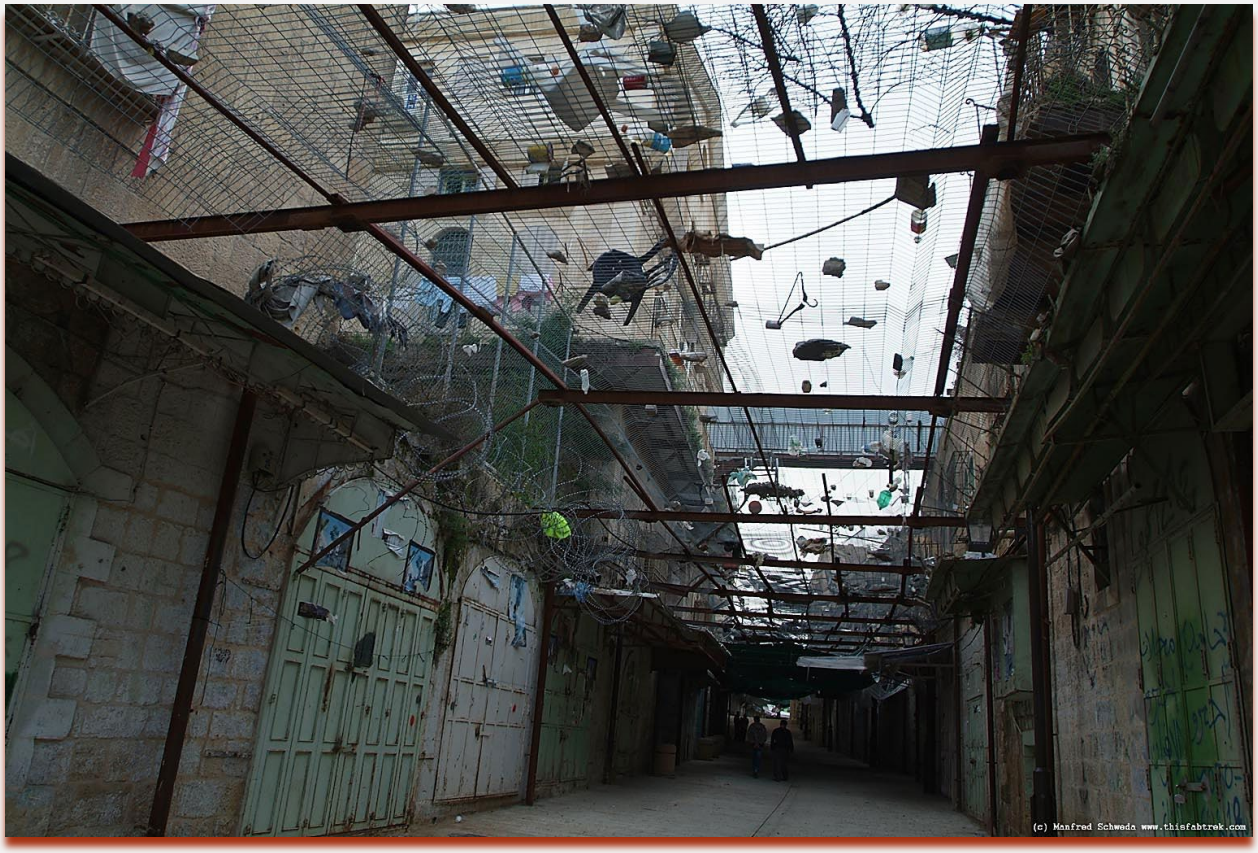


Figure 18: Protective netting installed above market lanes in Hebron's Old City. Source: Photograph by Manfred Schweda.

Metal netting was installed above sections of the Old City market corridor to protect Palestinian vendors and pedestrians from objects thrown from settlement areas located above the market lanes. The structure illustrates how security infrastructure reshapes everyday commercial space and circulation within Hebron's Old City.

The security narrative transforms land into risky terrain. Agricultural fields near settlements become "sensitive zones." Market corridors become "volatile areas." The spatial language of threat legitimizes intervention.

Misinformation scholarship helps illuminate how such framing gains durability. Research demonstrates that emotionally charged narratives, particularly those invoking fear, spread rapidly and resist correction (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Security rhetoric, grounded in fear of instability, becomes socially sticky.

Within this environment, deliberate contestation weakens. Healey's (1997) model of collaborative governance assumes shared communicative arenas. Yet when spatial decisions are embedded in security discourse, participation becomes structurally constrained. Debate over necessity is reframed from irresponsibility.

Thus, Security narrative therefore functions not merely as political messaging but as planning infrastructure. It reorganizes where food can circulate, when agriculture can occur, and which commercial spaces remain economically viable.

4.4.2 Environmental Protection and Cultural Regulation

Environmental discourse operates alongside security framing as a second planning logic. Protection of biodiversity, regulation of wild plant harvesting, and land classification as nature reserves are presented through global conservation language.

Environmental planning is often positioned as politically neutral. Sustainability and ecological protection are widely accepted normative goals for planning institutions. However, in spatially contested contexts, conservation law can intersect with uneven sovereignty.

The regulation of za'atar harvesting illustrates this intersection. While plant protection laws are framed as biodiversity preservation (Braverman, 2009), their enforcement occurs within an asymmetrical governance system. Cultural harvesting practices are rendered subject to criminal sanction within a broader structure of land fragmentation.

In this context, the language of sustainability intersects with territorial governance. Conservation regulations can restrict food practices without requiring political justification.

Planning theory has increasingly recognized the politics embedded within environmental governance. Porter (2010) argues that planning in settler-colonial contexts often uses neutral regulatory categories to sustain uneven land control. In Hebron, environmental designation intersects with gray spaces (Yiftachel, 2009), producing zones where food practices exist in regulatory suspension.

Environmental narrative therefore functions similarly to security narrative. By reframing from spatial intervention as ecological stewardship, it shifts attention away from territorial authority and toward environmental responsibility. Through this reframing, regulatory asymmetry becomes normalized.

4.4.3 Illegality and the Production of Informality

A third narrative logic shaping planning in Hebron is the discourse of illegality. Agricultural structures built without permits are categorized as unauthorized construction. Demolitions are framed as enforcement of planning law.

Illegality carries normative weight. It implies deviation from order. Yet as Roy (2005) argues, informality and illegality are often produced by planning systems themselves. When permit access is structurally constrained, unauthorized construction becomes predictable rather than exceptional.

In Area C, Palestinian applicants face extremely low permit approval rates (Bimkom, 2013; OCHA, 2023). Within this context, agricultural infrastructure exists in a condition of vulnerability. Demolition orders reinforce the framing of non-compliance.

The narrative of illegality obscures the structural origins of vulnerability. It individualizes responsibility. Food infrastructure becomes framed as a regulatory violation rather than survival strategy. Watson (2009) emphasizes that planning in deeply unequal contexts must confront how regulatory frameworks generate exclusion. In Hebron, illegality is not incidental; it is systematically reproduced.

This narrative logic matters for misinformation analysis. When illegality becomes normalized as explanation, broader structural conditions disappear from public interpretation. Regulatory precarity is naturalized.

4.4.4 Crisis Intensification and Narrative Amplification (2023–2024)

Developments in 2023–2024 demonstrate how narrative logics intensify under crisis. Following the October 2023 escalation, security discourse expanded significantly across the West Bank. OCHA (2024) documented new checkpoints, road closures, and heightened enforcement measures.

Crisis environments amplify emotional narratives. Research on misinformation indicates that fear-based messaging spreads rapidly and narrows deliberative space (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017; Vosoughi et al., 2018). In such contexts, planning decisions become less contestable.

Emergency framing legitimizes extraordinary measures. Agricultural access becomes secondary to security. Market restrictions appear protective. Surveillance expansion is normalized. Crisis does not create the planning structure in Hebron; it intensifies existing asymmetries. Narrative framing becomes thicker, more urgent, and less negotiable.

4.4.5 Narrative as Spatial Governance

Taken together, security discourse, environmental protection narratives, and illegality framing reveal how narrative operates as a mechanism of spatial governance. These narratives do not function separately from regulatory systems; they animate and stabilize them.

- Security discourse justifies mobility restrictions.
- Environmental discourse legitimizes cultural regulation.
- Illegality discourse rationalizes demolition.

Through repetition, these narratives become common sense. They structure how land, food production, and market space are interpreted while narrowing the range of politically imaginable alternatives.

Within this configuration, misinformation does not necessarily appear as explicit falsehood. It may operate as selective emphasis, omission, or reframing that obscures structural power relations. When narrative framing consistently aligns with regulatory asymmetry, it stabilizes spatial inequality.

Hebron therefore demonstrates how misinformation, understood as structured interpretive distortion that misrepresents the conditions producing spatial inequality, functions as a form of planning power. It shapes not only public interpretation but also the spatial outcomes of land governance.

4.5 Analytical Synthesis: Misinformation as Spatial Governance in Hebron

The preceding sections have examined three interrelated dynamics shaping Hebron's food system: the criminalization of agricultural production, the fragmentation of market space, and the normalization of security and environmental narratives as planning logic. Taking individually, each lens reveals a dimension of regulatory precarity. Taken together, they illustrate how misinformation functions as a form of spatial governance.

Hebron demonstrates that misinformation in planning does not necessarily appear as isolated false statements or viral digital rumors. Rather, it operates through structured narrative framings that shape how space is interpreted and how regulatory authority is justified. In this context, misinformation functions less as episodic distortion and more as systemic reframing.

4.5.1 From Regulation to Narrative Power

Lens One showed how agricultural production is rendered conditional through harvest coordination requirements, plant protection enforcement, and permit-based demolition regimes. These mechanisms do not eliminate food production; they render it uncertain. Farmers operate within zones of suspended legality, where access to land, water, and infrastructure depends on administrative discretion.

Lens Two demonstrated how commercial markets in the Old City have been segmented through street closures, checkpoint placement, and surveillance infrastructure. Economic decline follows restricted mobility. Yet decline is often seen through narratives of instability rather than structural restriction analysis.

Lens Three revealed that these regulatory interventions are consistently framed through security, environmental protection, and legal discourse. These narratives do not simply accompany regulation; they legitimize it. They translate asymmetrical authority into administrative rational policy.

Together, these dynamics produce a spatial condition in which food systems are perpetually vulnerable. Production is conditional. Circulation is fragmented. Infrastructure is precarious. Public interpretation is shaped through narratives that obscure structural asymmetry.

This is the critical analytical point: narrative framing stabilizes regulatory inequality.

4.5.2 Gray Space in Hebron: Militarized Administrative Suspension

Yiftachel (2009) conceptualizes gray spaces as zones of permanent temporariness; spaces suspended between legality and illegality, recognition, and erasure. Hebron exemplifies this condition in one of its most visibly coercive forms.

Agricultural land in Area C is neither fully permitted nor fully prohibited. Olive groves near settlement perimeters are not categorically illegal, yet access requires coordination. Agricultural infrastructure is not categorically banned yet permits are systematically denied. Market corridors in H2 are not formally abolished, yet mobility restrictions hollow them economically.

This produces militarized gray space:

- Legal categories exist.
- Enforcement is selective.
- Access is conditional.
- Sovereignty is fragmented.

Gray space in Hebron is stabilized through security discourse. The language of protection, prevention, and threat transforms permanent administrative precarity into necessary governance.

Here, misinformation operates not as isolated falsehood but as narrative framing that legitimizes suspended legality. Security discourse renders gray space rational. Food systems reveal this suspension with clarity. They are allowed to exist, but never fully secure.

4.5.3 Crisis Amplification and Narrative Consolidation

The escalation of restrictions in 2023–2024 illustrates how crisis intensifies narrative power. Increased checkpoints, mobility restrictions, and enforcement measures were justified under expanded security rationale (OCHA, 2024). Crisis of discourse narrows deliberative space.

Planning theory emphasizes participation, mediation, and communicative rationality (Healey, 1997; Forester, 1999). Yet in Hebron, governance operates within military-administrative frameworks where communicative arenas are limited. When security narrative dominates, contestation becomes politically constrained.

Misinformation scholarship shows that emotionally charged narratives; particularly those invoking fear; travel rapidly and resist correction (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). In crisis environments, fear-based framing stabilizes authority.

Thus, the crisis does not merely intensify regulations. It consolidates narrative legitimacy.

4.5.4 Misinformation Beyond Digital Virality

Importantly, Hebron's case broadens the definition of misinformation beyond social media circulation. While digital platforms may amplify narratives, the more enduring mechanism is institutional narrative framing embedded in planning practice.

Misinformation, in this context, can be understood as:

- Selective emphasis on security without contextualizing structural asymmetry
- Environmental framing detached from territorial politics
- Legalistic discourse that obscures permit denial structures

These forms of reframing distort structural conditions while maintaining administrative credibility. They do not necessarily involve fabricated facts. They involve interpretive distortion.

This distinction is analytically significant. It demonstrates that misinformation in planning can function structurally rather than episodically. It can operate through bureaucratic language rather than viral rumors.

4.5.5 Food Systems as Spatial Barometers

Food systems in Hebron reveal how narrative power translates into material consequence. Agriculture becomes temporally fragmented. Markets become spatially segmented. Infrastructure becomes demolish able. Food production is not an abstract policy issue. It is land, water, access roads, checkpoints, grazing routes, and storefronts.

When narrative framing legitimizes restriction, the spatial organization of food systems shifts. Territorial fragmentation reshapes economic continuity. Cultural practices become administratively vulnerable.

Thus, food systems function as barometers of spatial justice. They reveal how governance structures operate beneath formal planning language.

4.5.6 Answering the Research Question

Returning to the core research question:

How does misinformation function as a form of power in urban planning, particularly in shaping food systems within postcolonial and settler-colonial contexts?

Hebron demonstrates that misinformation functions as power when narrative framing stabilizes regulatory asymmetry and legitimizes spatial restriction. Security, environmental protection, and illegality discourses transform political authority into administrative necessity. Through this process, planning operates not only through formal regulation but through interpretive control. The governance of land becomes inseparable from the governance of meaning.

In Hebron, misinformation does not simply distort debate; it shapes territory. Hebron therefore represents the clearest example of militarized gray space within this thesis. More broadly, the Hebron case illustrates how misinformation can become embedded within institutional governance rather than circulating solely through digital media or public rumors. In this context, misinformation operates through the interpretive frameworks that shape how planning decisions are understood and justified. Security narratives, environmental protection discourse, and legality framing do not simply accompany spatial regulation; they actively structure how territorial control becomes publicly intelligible and administratively legitimate. By tracing how these narratives interact with land classification, mobility restrictions, and agricultural regulation, the Hebron case demonstrates that misinformation in planning operates as a form of spatial power that reorganizes both territory and everyday systems of food production.

Here, food systems reveal how occupation governance stabilizes spatial inequality through the combined force of regulatory control, infrastructural restriction, and narrative framing. The following chapter examines Cape Town, where similar dynamics emerge through a very different planning regime shaped by the spatial legacies of apartheid and post-apartheid urban governance.

Military Control

↓

Permit Regimes

↓

Agricultural Access Restrictions

↓

Market Fragmentation

↓

Food System Vulnerability

Figure 19:Spatial Governance and Food Systems in Hebron. Source: Author

Chapter 5: Cape Town: Apartheid Space, Informality, and Narrative Power in Urban Food Governance

5.1 Introduction: Colonial Urbanism and the Spatial Foundations of Inequality

The previous chapter examined how misinformation operates within the context of militarized occupation in Hebron. This chapter turns to a different planning regime: post-apartheid Cape Town, South Africa. Although the institutional context differs significantly, Cape Town reveals similar dynamics in which planning authority, regulatory frameworks, and narrative framing interact to shape food systems and reproduce spatial inequality.

Cape Town provides an important case for examining how misinformation functions as spatial governance within a postcolonial urban planning system. Cape Town provides an important case for examining how misinformation functions as spatial governance within a postcolonial urban planning system. The city's food geography reflects the long-term consequences of colonial land appropriation, apartheid spatial engineering, and contemporary urban governance (Christopher, 1994; Worden, 2012; Turok, 2001). Rather than emerging from neutral planning processes, the spatial organization of food access in Cape Town reflects historically produced inequalities embedded in land allocation, infrastructure investment, and regulatory systems (Battersby & Haysom, 2019; Watson, 2009). Rather than emerging from neutral planning processes, the spatial organization of food access in Cape Town reflects historically produced inequalities embedded in land allocation, infrastructure investment, and regulatory systems.

Cape Town was established in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) as a provisioning station supplying fresh produce to ships traveling between Europe and Asia (Worden, 2012). From its inception, the settlement was an agricultural supply zone integrated into imperial trade networks. Indigenous Khoisan communities were dispossessed of grazing and farming lands, while settler agriculture expanded through cadastral mapping and property registration systems that privileged European ownership.

This early dispossession established the spatial foundations of settler urbanism in the Cape region. Beginning in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dutch colonial authorities expanded settler agriculture through the granting of freehold farms to European settlers, particularly in areas surrounding Cape Town and the expanding frontier districts. These land grants, combined with commando systems that violently displaced Khoisan communities, enabled the consolidation of settler control over grazing and agricultural land (Worden, 2012). The introduction of cadastral mapping and European property law transformed indigenous landscapes of shared grazing and seasonal movement into bounded agricultural estates controlled by colonial settlers.

These processes not only reorganized land ownership but also restructured food production systems, embedding agricultural labor, land access, and settlement patterns within the expanding colonial economy. Enslaved labor, imported through the Dutch East India Company from regions including Southeast Asia and East Africa, became central to agricultural production in the Cape,

During the nineteenth century, British colonial administration expanded survey systems and transportation infrastructure, increasing the legibility of territory and strengthening colonial land administration (Christopher, 1994). Agricultural landscapes were incorporated into a formal property regime that further entrenched settler ownership and control.

By the mid-twentieth century, apartheid legislation radically reorganized Cape Town's urban form. The Group Areas Act of 1950 legally enforced racial segregation by designating residential zones according to racial classification. In 1966, District Six was declared a white residential area, leading to the forced removal of more than sixty thousand residents (Christopher, 1994). Displaced communities were relocated to peripheral townships such as Langa.

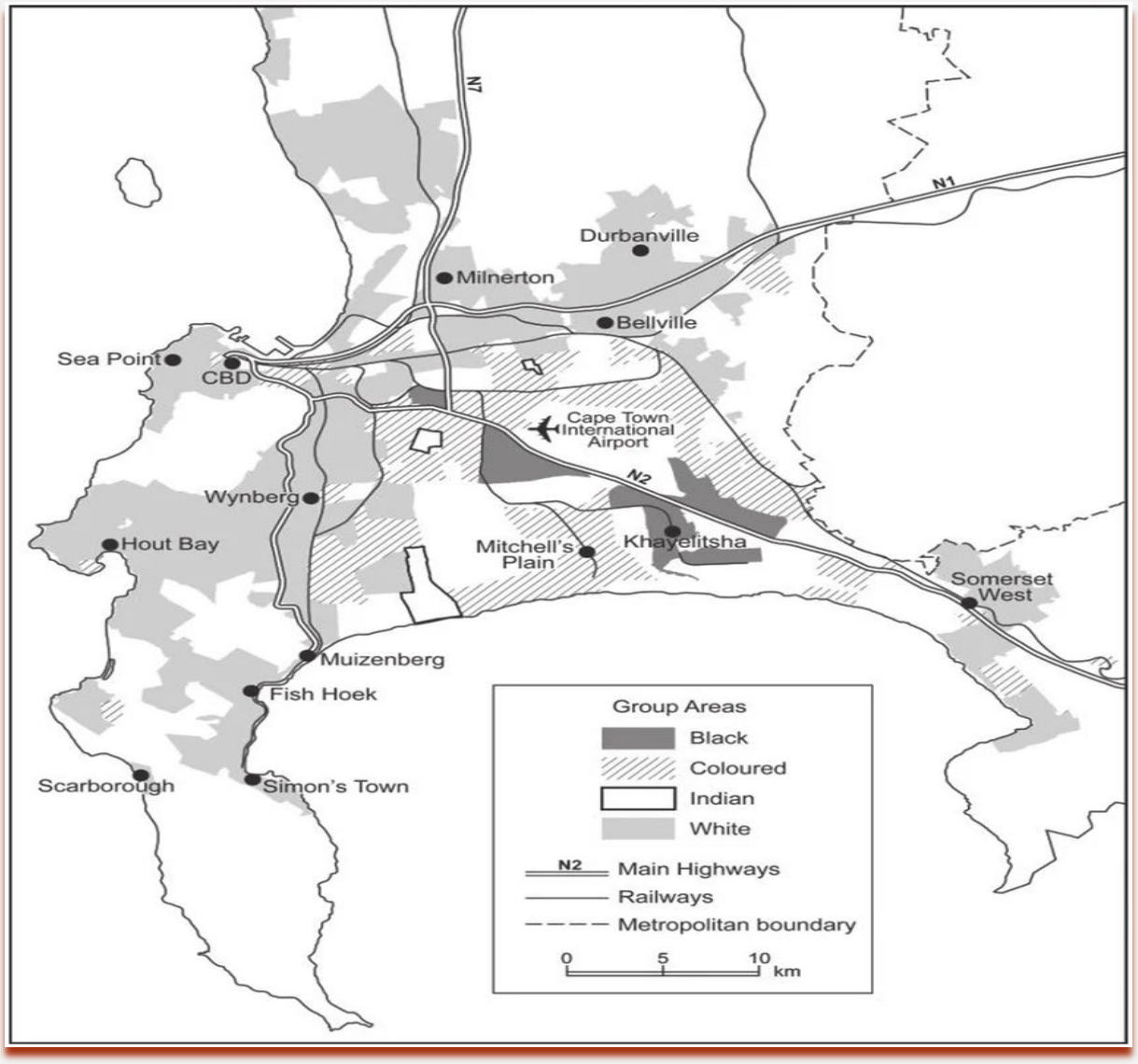


Figure 20:Apartheid spatial structure in Cape Town. Source: Christopher, A. J. (1994). The Atlas of Apartheid.

Gugulethu and Khayelitsha, deliberately situated between twenty-five kilometers and thirty-five kilometers from the city center.This spatial reorganization produced three structural consequences that continue to shape Cape Town's food system:

- residential communities were separated from productive agricultural land
- retail infrastructure remained concentrated in historically white commercial districts
- transportation networks were designed primarily to facilitate labor commuting rather than community provisioning

Turok (2001) describes apartheid cities as intentionally fragmented urban systems in which distance functioned as a *disciplinary instrument of spatial control*, rather than a disciplinary tool of the planning profession. The enforced separation between residential townships and economic centers created structural dependence on transportation systems for everyday survival.

Food access therefore became mediated through mobility infrastructure. Formal retail systems did not immediately expand into newly created townships, leaving many communities dependent on informal traders and neighborhood markets.

These historical developments illustrate the mechanisms of spatial governance discussed in Chapter 2. Colonial cadastral surveys and apartheid zoning systems simplified complex social landscapes into administratively legible territories. Differential legality emerged through racially structured land ownership and residential restrictions that distributed legal recognition unevenly across urban space. Infrastructural power operated through transportation corridors and township placement that reinforced spatial separation between residential areas and economic centers.

Together, these mechanisms produced the spatial conditions within which Cape Town's contemporary food systems operate.The map illustrates how apartheid planning separated racial groups and relocated Black and Colored communities to peripheral townships such as Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain on the Cape Flats, far from the central business district.

More broadly, Cape Town illustrates how misinformation can become embedded within urban governance rather than circulating solely through public rumors or digital media. In this context, misinformation operates through interpretive frameworks that shape how planning decisions are understood and justified. Narratives of modernization, market efficiency, urban order, and development do not simply describe food systems; they influence how urban inequality is explained and how regulatory interventions are legitimized. By examining how these narratives interact with spatial legacies of apartheid planning, this chapter demonstrates how misinformation functions as a mechanism of spatial governance within contemporary urban food systems.

5.2 Contemporary Food Insecurity and the Spatial Legacy of Apartheid

Drawing on studies conducted from 2011 to 2019, this section outlines how apartheid-era spatial inequalities continue to structure contemporary food insecurity in Cape Town. The spatial inequalities created through colonial and apartheid planning continue to shape food access in contemporary Cape Town. Research conducted by the African Food Security Urban Network indicates that approximately eighty percent of surveyed low-income households in Cape Town experience moderate to severe food insecurity (Battersby, 2011). Later studies show that dietary diversity remains significantly lower in townships such as Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain compared with wealthier suburban areas (Battersby & Haysom, 2019).

Distance remains one of the most important structural factors shaping these inequalities. Khayelitsha, one of Cape Town's largest townships, lies approximately thirty kilometers from the central business district. For many residents, accessing formal retail infrastructure requires long travel times and significant transportation costs. Transport expenses alone can

consume between fifteen and thirty percent of monthly household income in low-income communities (Battersby & Crush, 2014).

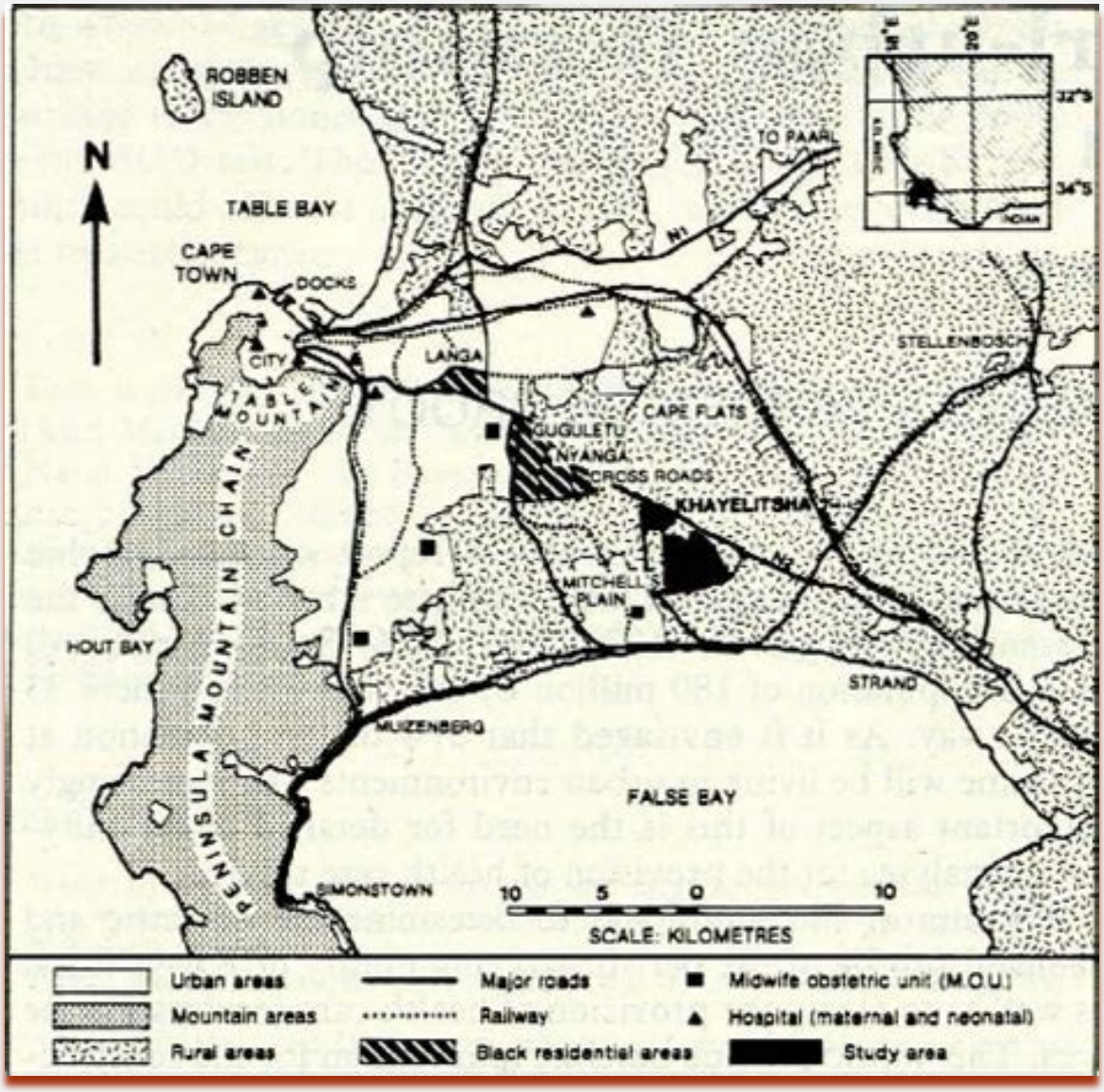


Figure 21. Location of Cape Flats townships relative to central Cape Town. Source: Adapted from City of Cape Town Spatial Development Framework; Turok (2001).

Apartheid planning relocated large populations to peripheral settlements such as Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, and Gugulethu, creating long distances between residential areas and economic infrastructure.

Within this spatial configuration, Cape Town's food system functions as a hybrid provisioning network composed of multiple overlapping supply systems.

The contemporary food system includes:

- Large corporate supermarkets such as Shoprite, Pick n Pay, and Boxer
- Neighborhood-based spaza shops

- Street vendors and mobile produce traders
- Township fresh produce markets
- Small-scale urban agriculture initiatives

This hybrid structure reflects structural inequality rather than coordinated planning design. Formal retail systems dominate large-scale distribution, while informal traders provide neighborhood-level access to fresh food in areas where supermarkets remain spatially distant.

Despite their importance, informal food traders frequently operate within conditions of regulatory uncertainty and social stigmatization. Traders may hold permits yet remain vulnerable to enforcement campaigns, relocation of orders, or confiscation of goods.

Food systems therefore provide a critical lens through which to examine spatial governance in Cape Town. When infrastructure investment, transportation systems, and regulatory recognition are unevenly distributed, food access becomes correspondingly unequal.

Colonial and Apartheid Land Segregation

↓

Peripheral Township Development

↓

Separation from Jobs and Retail Infrastructure

↓

Mobility Dependence

↓

Higher Food Access Costs

↓

Reliance on Informal and Hybrid Food Networks

↓

Uneven Food Security Across Cape Town

Figure 21: Apartheid Spatial Structure and Food Access Inequality in Cape Town. Source: Author's diagram based on Battersby (2011) and Battersby & Crush (2014).

5.3 Lens One: Criminalization and the Regulation of Informal Food Trade

Informal food economies play a central role in everyday food access across Cape Town's townships. While formal supermarket chains dominate large-scale food distribution within the metropolitan economy, many low-income communities depend heavily on neighborhood-based informal traders, street vendors, and spaza shops for daily food provisioning. These small-scale retail systems operate at the intersection of household survival, neighborhood economies, and urban planning

regulations. Battersby, J. (2011). Urban food insecurity in Cape Town, South Africa: An alternative approach to food access. *Development Southern Africa*, 28(4), 545–561.



Figure 22:Township food market in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Source: Photograph: Battersby & Crush (2014) / African Food Security Urban Network or Wikimedia Commons (licensed image of Khayelitsha market).

Informal and semi-formal vendors provide neighborhood-level food access in areas where formal retail infrastructure is unevenly distributed

Informal food traders provide several advantages that large formal retail systems often cannot offer within township environments. Vendors operate within walking distance of residential areas, reducing the transportation costs associated with traveling to distant supermarkets. They frequently sell food in small quantities that match the purchasing patterns of low-income households whose incomes are irregular or limited. Informal vendors also extend flexible credit to neighborhood residents, allowing families to purchase food even when cash is unavailable. In this sense, informal traders function not only as retail providers but as embedded social institutions within township communities (Battersby & Crush, 2014).

Despite their critical role in sustaining local food access, informal food economies operate within conditions of regulatory uncertainty. Municipal planning systems frequently frame informal trade through regulatory categories that emphasize order, licensing, and spatial control. Street vendors may require permits to operate in designated trading areas, while spaza shops may be subject to zoning restrictions, health regulations, or enforcement inspections. Although some traders obtain permits, many operate in ambiguous legal conditions where regulatory enforcement can vary significantly across different parts of the city.

This regulatory ambiguity creates what can be described as conditional legality. Informal food traders are neither fully recognized as integral components of the urban food system nor entirely prohibited from operating. Instead, they occupy a regulatory gray zone where their activities are tolerated under certain conditions but remain vulnerable to enforcement actions, confiscation of goods, or relocation of campaigns. Municipal enforcement operations periodically remove vendors from sidewalks or informal markets in the name of urban order, traffic management, or sanitation concerns.

Planning discourse often frames informal food economies through narratives of disorder, congestion, or regulatory non-compliance (Battersby, J. & Watson, V. (2019). Street trading may be portrayed as obstructing pedestrian circulation, contributing to sanitation challenges, or undermining formal retail businesses. These narratives can shape public perception of informal markets as problems requiring regulation rather than as essential infrastructures supporting urban food access.

Roy (2005) argues that urban informality is not simply the absence of regulation, but a condition produced through planning systems themselves. Informality emerges where regulatory frameworks selectively recognize certain economic activities while marginalizing others. In Cape Town, the regulatory status of informal food traders reflects this dynamism. While supermarkets operate within highly structured legal frameworks supported by large-scale commercial infrastructure, neighborhood vendors often operate within fragmented and inconsistent regulatory environments.

This regulatory asymmetry has important consequences for food access. Informal vendors frequently provide the most immediate and affordable sources of fresh produce, cooked meals, and staple goods within townships. When enforcement campaigns restrict street trading or limit vendor locations, the result can be reduced neighborhood food availability rather than improved urban order.

Narrative framing plays a crucial role in shaping how these regulatory interventions are interpreted. When informal trade is framed primarily as a problem of disorder or illegality, regulatory enforcement appears as a rational response to urban management challenges. However, such framings often obscure the structural spatial inequalities that produce reliance on informal markets in the first place. Townships were historically located far from commercial infrastructure and employment centers, creating environments where formal retail investment remained limited for decades.

Within this context, informal food economies can be understood as adaptive responses to spatial inequality rather than deviations from formal planning systems. Vendors fill gaps created by distance, mobility constraints, and uneven infrastructure distribution. Their presence reflects the geography of apartheid urban planning as much as contemporary economic necessity.

From the perspective of this thesis, informal food markets illustrate how narrative framing intersects with spatial governance. These markets do not simply exist as economic activities; they become sites where planning discourses,

regulatory practices, and spatial histories converge to shape how urban authorities perceive and manage everyday survival strategies. When informal traders are portrayed primarily through the language of illegality or disorder, regulatory intervention appears administratively necessary. Such framings position traders as threats to urban order rather than as essential providers of food access in areas underserved by formal retail, thereby legitimizing enforcement actions that obscure the structural conditions driving informality. Yet the underlying spatial conditions that produced reliance on informal markets remain unaddressed. Decades of apartheid-era spatial separation limited formal retail investment in townships, and high transportation costs continue to shape where and how people access food, meaning that enforcement alone cannot resolve the inequalities that make informal trade indispensable. In this way, planning narratives can transform historically produced inequalities into problems of regulatory compliance. By shifting attention from structural drivers to individual traders, these narratives depoliticize spatial injustice and recast systemic failures as issues of rule-breaking, thereby reinforcing the very inequalities they claim to manage.

Informal food economies therefore reveal how urban planning systems shape not only the distribution of food infrastructure but also the interpretive narratives through which economic practices are understood. The governance of informal markets has become a site where spatial inequality, regulatory authority, and narrative framing converge.

Informal food economies therefore function as adaptive infrastructures within spatially unequal cities. Rather than representing failures of formal planning systems, they emerge in response to the spatial legacies of apartheid urban design that separated residential communities from retail infrastructure and economic opportunity. When planning discourse frames informal markets primarily through narratives of disorder or illegality, regulatory interventions can appear administratively justified while leaving the underlying spatial inequalities that sustain informal trade unaddressed.

5.4 Lens Two: Market Fragmentation and Retail Concentration

While informal food traders provide essential neighborhood access to food in Cape Town's townships, large corporate supermarkets continue to dominate the broader urban food economy. (Battersby & Peyton, 2014; Crush & Frayne, 2011). Major retail chains such as Shoprite, Pick n Pay, and Boxer control large segments of the formal food distribution system, operating extensive supply networks that connect regional agricultural production to urban retail outlets (Greenberg, 2017). These supermarkets benefit from centralized logistics, formal infrastructure investment, and integration into national retail markets (D'Haese & Van Huylenbroeck, 2005).

However, the spatial distribution of these retail networks remains uneven across Cape Town's urban landscape. Supermarkets are significantly more concentrated in historically affluent suburbs and commercial districts than in peripheral townships located on the Cape Flats. Although some supermarkets have expanded into township areas in recent decades, many residents still rely on transportation to reach major retail centers.

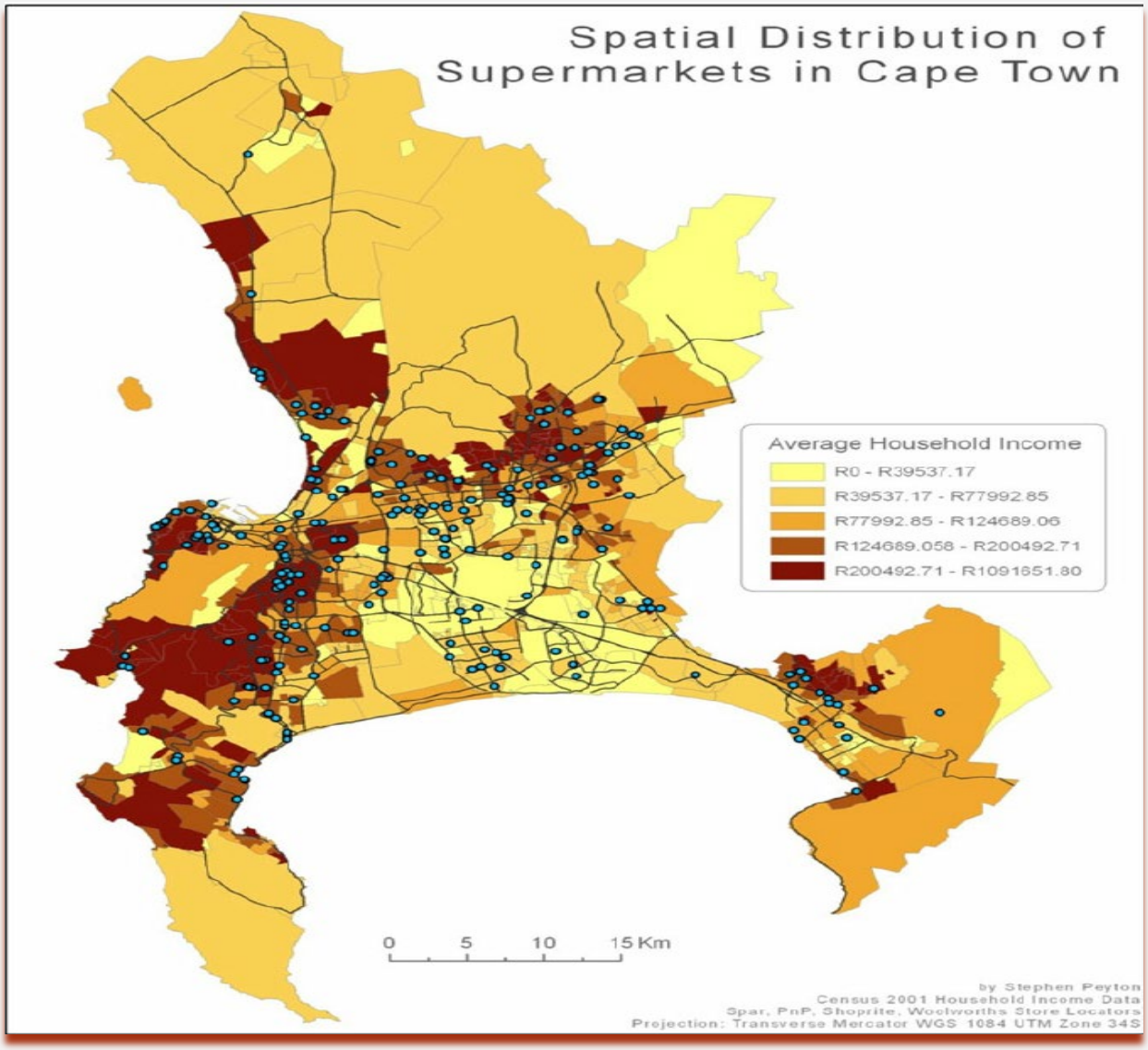


Figure 23: Spatial distribution of supermarkets in Cape Town relative to household income levels. Source: Battersby, J., & Haysom, G. (2019).

Supermarkets are more concentrated in higher-income areas, while lower-income township communities on the Cape Flats often rely on informal food traders or travel longer distances to access large retail stores.

Distance and mobility therefore remain critical factors for shaping food access. Households in townships such as Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain often travel considerable distances to reach large supermarkets where staple foods may be sold at lower prices than neighborhood shops. This creates a paradox within the urban food system: supermarkets may offer cheaper goods through economies of scale, yet the transportation costs required to access them can offset these savings for low-income households.

Transportation infrastructure has become a key mediator of food access. Public transportation systems such as minibuses and commuter rail lines connect peripheral townships to the central city, but these systems were historically designed to facilitate labor commuting rather than everyday neighborhood provisioning. As a result, food shopping trips often require additional travel time, multiple transport connections, and financial costs.

Battersby and Crush (2014) describe this dynamic as mobility-dependent food access. In such systems, the ability to obtain affordable food depends not only on household income but also on the availability of reliable transportation infrastructure. For many township residents, mobility constraints shape where and how food can be purchased.

Retail geography therefore reproduces elements of apartheid spatial planning. The separation between residential townships and commercial infrastructure reinforces patterns of uneven service distribution across the metropolitan region. Although post-apartheid planning has sought to address spatial inequality, the urban form established during decades of segregation continues to structure the location of economic investment.

Narrative framing also influences how these spatial inequalities are interpreted. Food access disparities are often explained through market-based narratives emphasizing consumer choice, business investment patterns, or household purchasing behavior. While these explanations capture certain economic dynamics, they can obscure the historical planning decisions that placed large populations far from commercial centers.

From the perspective of spatial governance, supermarket distribution illustrates how infrastructure investment interacts with urban form to shape everyday access to food. Retail location decisions, transportation systems, and neighborhood development patterns collectively determine which communities benefit from large-scale food retail, and which remain dependent on informal food economies.

The layered nature of Cape Town's food system can be made visible by examining the spatial patterns through which formal and informal food economies occupy the urban landscape. As shown in the figure above, supermarkets cluster along major arterial roads and commercial nodes, reflecting both apartheid-era spatial planning and contemporary market logics that prioritize high-income catchment areas and mobility corridors (Christopher, 1994; Worden, 2012). In contrast, informal traders tend to concentrate along pedestrian-dense street networks; particularly near taxi ranks, train stations, school routes, and neighborhood intersections; where foot traffic is high and regulatory enforcement is uneven (Skinner, 2008; Battersby & Crush, 2014). These locations often form recognizable micro-corridors of informal commerce, such as the vendor clusters along the Bellville transport interchange, the Nyanga and Khayelitsha taxi ranks, and the high-density pedestrian routes connecting township residential areas to transit nodes. Informal markets also emerge at transitional edges between residential and commercial zones, where zoning ambiguity creates openings for flexible, small-scale food retail (Battersby & Watson, 2020). When these spatial patterns are layered onto the formal retail geography, a more complex food landscape becomes visible: supermarkets anchor regional distribution networks, while informal traders fill the fine-grained gaps in everyday accessibility. Together, these spatial layers illustrate how food access in Cape Town is structured not only by market forces but by the enduring spatial legacies of colonial and apartheid planning, which continue to shape where formal retail is viable and where informal markets become essential (Battersby, 2011; Turok, 2001).

5.5 Lens Three: The Philippi Horticultural Area and Development Narratives

If informal food economies reveal the regulatory ambiguity of township markets and supermarket geography illustrates spatial inequality in retail infrastructure, narrative framing provides the interpretive logic through which these conditions are understood and governed. In Cape Town, planning discourse frequently frames urban food systems through narratives of

development, modernization, and formalization. These narratives shape how informal markets, township retail spaces, and neighborhood food practices are interpreted within urban governance.

Municipal planning frameworks often emphasize the expansion of formal retail infrastructure, improved market regulation, and the modernization of urban commercial environments. Within this discourse, supermarkets are frequently presented as symbols of economic development and urban progress. Large retail investments are interpreted as indicators of market growth, job creation, and improved consumer access. At the same time, informal trading spaces are often framed as temporary or transitional economic activities that will eventually be replaced by more formal commercial systems.

However, this developmental narrative can obscure the structural conditions that sustain informal food economies in township environments. Informal traders do not simply persist because of regulatory gaps or economic informality; they operate within spatial contexts where formal retail infrastructure remains unevenly distributed, and mobility costs limit access to distant supermarkets. When development discourse assumes that modernization will naturally replace informal markets, it risks overlooking the everyday economic functions that informal food systems provide.

Planning theory has long recognized that narratives play a powerful role in shaping urban governance. Porter (2010) argues that planning discourse often frames spatial interventions through neutral concepts such as development, modernization, or urban improvement. These narratives can make planning decisions appear technical or inevitable while obscuring the political histories that structure urban inequality.

A clear example of this tension between development narratives and food system infrastructure can be seen in debates surrounding the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA). The PHA is one of Cape Town's most significant agricultural zones and supplies large quantities of fresh vegetables to the metropolitan region. Despite its role in supporting urban food systems, the area has faced increasing pressure from residential and commercial development proposals *(Cartwright & Oelofse, 2016; Haysom, 2015).* Development advocates frequently frame these proposals through narratives of urban growth, housing demand, and economic modernization. However, critics argue that converting agricultural land into urban development risks undermining one of the city's most important sources of local food production. The debate illustrates how planning narratives emphasizing growth and modernization can reframe agricultural land as underutilized space, even when it functions as critical infrastructure for urban food systems. In this way, narrative framing reshapes how food-producing landscapes are interpreted within planning systems. Agricultural land that sustains urban food supply may be reclassified discursively as vacant or underproductive when evaluated primarily through the lens of urban development potential. Such reinterpretations allow planning priorities to shift toward residential expansion and commercial investment while obscuring the long-term role of urban agriculture in supporting metropolitan food security.

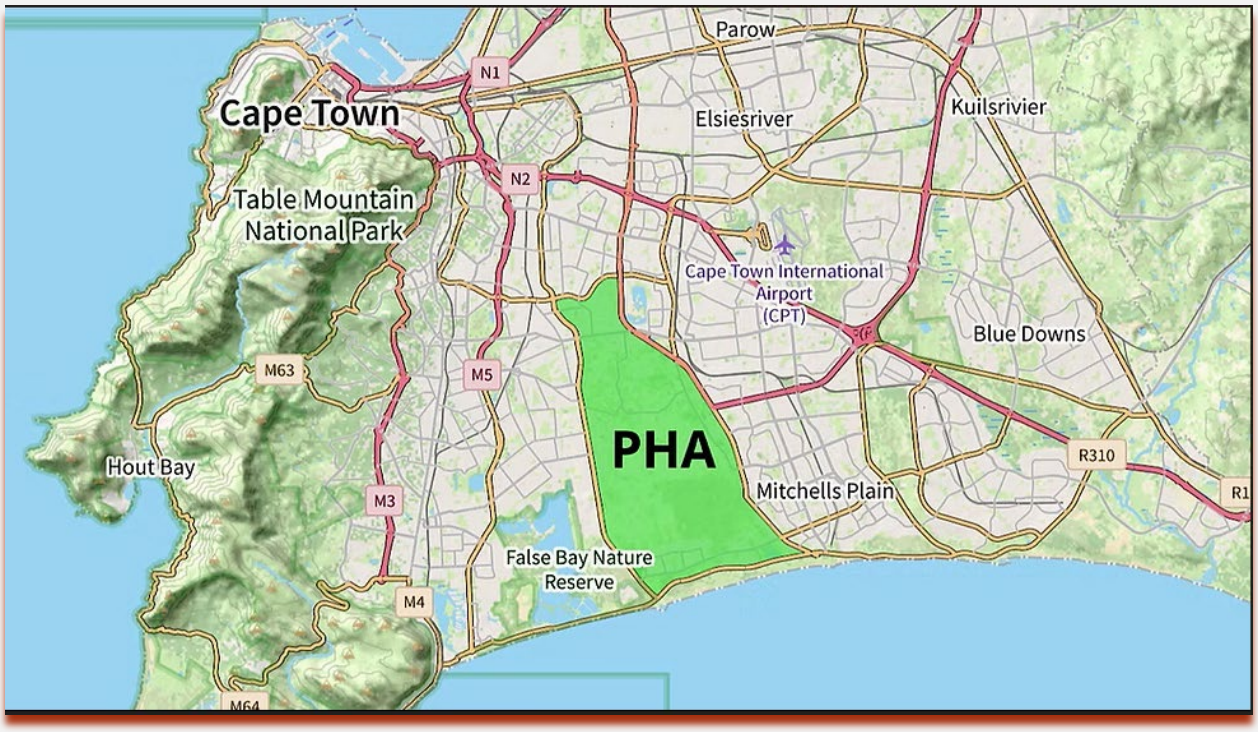


Figure 24: Location of the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA) within the Cape Town metropolitan region. Source: Battersby & Haysom, 2019

The PHA lies on the Cape Flats near major township settlements and represents one of the city's most important urban agricultural zones supplying fresh produce to Cape Town's food system.

In Cape Town, development narratives frequently intersect with long-standing spatial inequalities inherited from apartheid urban planning. Township areas remain physically separated from many economic centers, while infrastructure investment continues to concentrate in historically affluent districts. Within this context, the framing of informal markets as disorderly or temporary can shift attention away from the spatial conditions that produce reliance on these markets.

Narrative framing also influences regulatory priorities. Municipal authorities may emphasize street trading regulations, licensing systems, or spatial management policies designed to organize informal vendors within designated trading zones. While such regulations can support urban management objectives, they may also reinforce perceptions that informal food traders represent regulatory challenges rather than essential components of township food provisioning.

From the perspective of spatial governance, these narratives shape how planning systems interpret urban food economies. When informal markets are framed primarily as obstacles to modernization, regulatory interventions appear justified as steps toward development. Yet the everyday dependence of township residents on informal traders reveals a different reality: informal markets function as critical infrastructures of food access within spatially unequal cities.

In this sense, narrative framing does not simply describe urban food systems; it actively participates in their governance. Development discourse can stabilize existing spatial inequalities by presenting uneven infrastructure distribution as a temporary stage of urban modernization rather than as the legacy of apartheid planning decisions.

Within the broader argument of this thesis, Cape Town demonstrates how misinformation in planning may operate through selective framing rather than explicit falsehood. Narratives emphasizing modernization, market efficiency, or formal retail expansion can obscure the historical spatial structures that shape food access across the metropolitan region. Through these discursive mechanisms, planning narratives help normalize uneven food infrastructures while directing attention toward regulatory management rather than structural transformation.

5.6 Crisis Narratives and Emergency Governance

Crisis situations often intensify existing spatial inequalities within urban food systems. In cities characterized by deeply uneven spatial development, emergency governance can amplify structural vulnerabilities rather than simply manage temporary disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a clear example of how crisis narratives intersect with urban food systems in Cape Town.



Figure 25: Informal food traders in Cape Town townships. Source: Battersby & Watson (2020).

Informal vendors play a critical role in neighborhood-level food access, particularly in areas where supermarkets remain spatially distant.

During the early stages of the pandemic, national lockdown regulations in South Africa restricted many informal trading activities before exemptions were introduced for food vendors. These restrictions temporarily disrupted neighborhood-level food distribution systems within township communities across Cape Town. Informal traders who normally supply fresh produce, prepared foods, and everyday groceries to residents were initially unable to operate under strict lockdown

regulations. As a result, many township residents experienced reduced access to nearby food sources, particularly during the first weeks of the lockdown (Battersby & Watson, 2020).

These disruptions revealed the extent to which township food systems rely on informal food infrastructures. In many neighborhoods, informal traders operate within walking distance of residential areas, providing flexible and affordable access to fresh produce and prepared foods. When regulatory restrictions temporarily halted these activities, households often had to rely on distant supermarkets or limited emergency food assistance programs.

Emergency governance also tends to narrow deliberative space within planning systems. Crisis narratives emphasize urgency and rapid intervention, often reducing opportunities for participatory decision-making. Within this policy environment, regulatory measures may be introduced quickly with limited consultation with the communities most affected by them.

Research on misinformation and crisis communication demonstrates that emotionally charged narratives can accelerate policy acceptance while discouraging critical deliberation (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). During the pandemic, public discourse frequently framed lockdown restrictions as necessary for public health measures, emphasizing compliance and rapid regulatory enforcement. While these measures were introduced to address an immediate health crisis, their implementation also revealed how fragile township food systems remain under conditions of regulatory uncertainty.

From the perspective of spatial governance, the pandemic illustrates how crisis narratives can temporarily reconfigure urban food infrastructures. Informal traders who normally function as critical neighborhood food providers became subject to rapidly shifting regulatory rules. Although exemptions were later introduced for food vendors, the initial restrictions highlighted the dependence of township communities on informal provisioning systems that operate outside formal retail infrastructures.

Within the broader argument of this thesis, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates how crisis narratives can reinforce existing spatial inequalities. Emergency governance may appear temporary, but it often reveals the structural conditions that shape everyday urban life. In Cape Town, the disruption of informal food trading during lockdown exposed the central role that informal markets play in sustaining food access within spatially unequal cities.

5.7 Food Systems as Indicators of Spatial Governance

Cape Town's food system reveals how planning authority shapes the conditions of everyday urban survival. Patterns of food access across the metropolitan region are not simply the outcome of consumer choice or market dynamics; they reflect historically produced spatial inequalities embedded in the city's planning infrastructure.

The mobility burden imposed on township residents illustrates the enduring spatial geometry of apartheid urban design. Communities located in peripheral settlements such as Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain remain physically separated from many employment centers and commercial districts. As a result, accessing formal retail infrastructure often requires long travel times and significant transportation costs. Food access therefore becomes dependent on mobility infrastructure rather than neighborhood proximity.

Legitimacy hierarchies also structure the urban food economy. Informal traders provide essential food access within township neighborhoods by supplying fresh produce, prepared foods, and everyday groceries within walking distance of

residential areas. Yet these traders frequently operate within conditions of conditional legality in which licensing requirements, enforcement campaigns, and spatial regulations create regulatory uncertainty. Informal food systems are therefore essential and precarious within Cape Town's urban governance structure.

Development priorities further shape how land is valued within planning systems. Productive agricultural landscapes such as the Philippi Horticultural Area represent one of the city's most important sources of locally produced fresh vegetables. However, these agricultural lands are increasingly subject to development pressure as urban expansion advances across the Cape Flats. Within planning discourse, such land may be framed as underutilized or available for redevelopment, allowing urban growth narratives to overshadow the long-term importance of local food production for metropolitan food security.

Together, these dynamics show how food systems function as spatial barometers of planning governance. Mobility infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and development priorities shape not only the physical distribution of food but also the conditions under which urban residents access everyday necessities. In cities characterized by deep historical inequalities, food systems reveal the underlying spatial logics through which planning decision structure opportunity, vulnerability, and survival.

Within the broader argument of this thesis, Cape Town demonstrates how narrative framing operates alongside regulatory and infrastructural power in shaping urban food systems. Development of discourse, modernization narratives, and regulatory classifications influence how food infrastructures are interpreted and governed. Through these processes, planning narratives can normalize spatial inequalities inherited from colonial and apartheid urban planning while directing attention toward regulatory management rather than structural transformation.

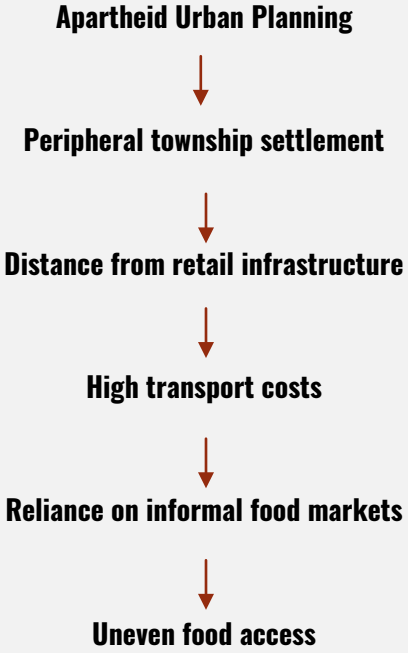


Figure 26:Spatial pathway linking apartheid urban form to contemporary food access inequality. Source: Author's conceptual model based on Turok (2001) and Battersby & Crush (2014)

5.8 Gray Space and Conditional Urban Inclusion

Gray space in Cape Town emerges through municipal regulation and market dynamics rather than through militarized governance. While the institutional context differs from the case of Hebron, the concept of gray space remains useful for understanding how urban food systems operate within conditions of partial recognition and regulatory uncertainty.

In many township neighborhoods across Cape Town, informal food traders provide essential access to fresh produce, prepared foods, and everyday groceries. These traders often operate with municipal permits or trading licenses, yet their activities remain vulnerable to enforcement campaigns, spatial relocation policies, or confiscation of goods during regulatory inspections. As a result, informal food economies exist within a state of conditional legality. They are tolerated because they provide necessary food access within underserved communities, yet they remain exposed to regulatory interventions that can disrupt their livelihoods.

A similar condition of regulatory ambiguity can be observed in debates surrounding the Philippi Horticultural Area. Although the area is legally designated for agricultural use and functions as one of the city's most important fresh-produce zones, it has repeatedly faced development pressure associated with urban expansion. Proposals for residential and commercial development periodically challenge the long-term protection of the agricultural landscape, producing a persistent state of uncertainty about the future of this food-producing region within the metropolitan planning framework. This uncertainty reflects what Yiftachel (2009) describes as gray space; zones that are legally recognized yet politically precarious, where activities are tolerated but never fully secured within formal planning systems. In the case of the PHA, development narratives frame the area as available for potential urban growth, thereby sustaining its conditional inclusion and undermining its long-term agricultural protection.

Township food economies therefore operate within a condition of suspended legitimacy. Informal markets and urban agricultural landscapes are simultaneously essential to the functioning of the city's food system and marginalized within formal planning priorities. They provide critical infrastructure for everyday food access yet often lack infrastructural investment, regulatory stability, and long-term protection afforded to formal commercial sectors.

Oren Yiftachel describes such conditions through the concept of gray space, referring to areas and economic practices that exist between legality and illegality, recognition, and exclusion. Within these spaces, activities are neither fully prohibited nor fully incorporated into formal planning systems. Instead, they remain in a state of conditional inclusion, tolerated but not fully supported by urban governance structures. (Yiftachel, 2009).

Narrative framing plays an important role in stabilizing this condition. Informal traders may be portrayed within planning discourse as sources of congestion, disorder, or regulatory challenge, while productive agricultural land may be described as underutilized or available for redevelopment. These narratives shape how planners, policymakers, and the public interpret informal food economies and urban agricultural landscapes.



Figure 27: Informal food traders operating in a Cape Town street market. Source: Wikimedia Commons – Street market Cape Town or African Food Security Urban Network.

Informal vendors provide essential neighborhood-level food access but frequently operate within conditions of regulatory uncertainty and conditional legality within municipal planning systems

Through such framing, regulatory ambiguity becomes normalized within urban governance. Informal food systems remain essential yet precarious, operating within planning environments that simultaneously depend on them and marginalize them.

Within the broader argument of this thesis, Cape Town demonstrates how gray space can emerge not only through coercive political control but also through the interaction of planning regulation, market dynamics, and narrative framing. Food

systems therefore reveal how urban governance structures shape the conditions of inclusion, exclusion, and survival within unequal cities.

Taken together, these dynamics illustrate how narrative framing operates alongside regulatory and infrastructural power in shaping Cape Town's food system. Informal markets, retail infrastructure, and agricultural landscapes are governed not only through zoning regulations and investment patterns but also through interpretive narratives that shape how urban space is understood. Development of discourse, modernization narratives, and regulatory classifications influence which food infrastructures are recognized as legitimate and which remain marginal within planning priorities. In this sense, narrative framing becomes an active component of spatial governance, shaping the conditions under which urban food systems operate.

5.9 Answering the Research Question

The case of Cape Town demonstrates several mechanisms through which misinformation functions as a form of power within urban planning systems. Rather than appearing primarily as false information circulating through digital media, misinformation operates through narrative framing embedded in planning discourse, regulatory practice, and development policy.

Disorder narratives frequently legitimize enforcement actions against informal traders. Street vendors and neighborhood food markets, which provide essential food access in township communities, may be framed within planning discourse as sources of congestion, disorder, or regulatory violation. Through this framing, enforcement campaigns appear as necessary efforts to maintain urban order, even when they disrupt food provisioning systems relied upon by low-income residents.

Development narratives similarly reshape how land is interpreted within urban planning systems. Productive agricultural landscapes such as the Philippi Horticultural Area may be described as vacant, underutilized, or available for redevelopment. This framing allows planning authorities and private developers to prioritize residential and commercial expansion while downplaying the long-term importance of urban agriculture for regional food security.

Crisis narratives also play an important role in shaping regulatory authority. During emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis discourse can suppress public deliberation and normalize rapid regulatory intervention. Restrictions on informal trading introduced during lockdown periods illustrate how emergency governance can temporarily reshape food distribution systems while limiting opportunities for community participation in policy decisions.

At the same time, structural inequalities rooted in apartheid spatial planning are frequently reframed through market-based explanations. Long travel distances between townships and retail centers, limited infrastructure investment, and uneven access to economic opportunity may be interpreted as symptoms of market inefficiency or economic stagnation rather than as the enduring spatial legacy of apartheid urban design.

Through these discursive processes, narrative framing stabilizes spatial inequality by presenting regulatory decisions as technically necessary rather than politically contested. Planning interventions appear neutral and administratively rational even when they reproduce historically produced disparities in land access, infrastructure investment, and economic opportunity.

Cape Town therefore confirms the central argument of this thesis: misinformation functions as a form of spatial governance within postcolonial urban planning systems. By shaping how urban space is interpreted, narrative framing influences regulatory priorities, development decisions, and the everyday conditions under which food systems operate

While Cape Town illustrates how spatial inequality persists through the legacy of apartheid urban planning, the following chapter examines a different governance context in the United States. The case of Madison, Wisconsin demonstrates how similar mechanisms of narrative framing and spatial governance can operate within liberal democratic planning systems.

More broadly, the Cape Town case demonstrates that misinformation in urban planning often operates through selective framing rather than explicit factual distortion. Narratives emphasizing modernization, market efficiency, and urban order can obscure the spatial histories that structure contemporary inequality. When these narratives become embedded within planning discourse, they shape how food systems, infrastructure investment, and development priorities are interpreted. Cape Town therefore illustrates how narrative framing functions as a form of spatial power within postcolonial urban governance, stabilizing historically produced inequalities while presenting planning decisions as neutral or technically necessary.

Chapter 6: Madison: Settler Colonial Planning, Ho-Chunk Sovereignty, and the Politics of Food and Land

6.1 Territorial Foundations: Ho-Chunk Land Before Madison

Having examined how misinformation operates within militarized occupation in Hebron and post-apartheid urban governance in Cape Town, this chapter turns to a third planning regime: liberal settler municipal governance in Madison, Wisconsin. While Madison is often celebrated for progressive planning practices and a thriving local food culture, this case demonstrates how settler colonial spatial governance can become normalized within liberal democratic institutions. Through the lenses of Indigenous land dispossession, municipal food planning, and narrative framing around sustainability and local food, the chapter examines how misinformation operates not through overt coercion but through historical erasure and institutional omission, discursive processes that obscure Indigenous presence and naturalize settler claims to land *(Tuck & Yang, 2012; Simpson, 2014)*.

Long before the city of Madison was surveyed, platted, and incorporated in 1836, the narrow isthmus between Lakes Mendota and Monona formed part of the ancestral homeland of the Ho-Chunk Nation (Hoocąk). Archaeological evidence, oral histories, and historical records document Indigenous presence in this region for thousands of years (Whyte, 2018; Hill, 2017; Ho-Chunk Nation, 2021). Prior to the emergence of municipal planning institutions, the Ho-Chunk and neighboring Indigenous nations governed land through ecological relationships that structured mobility, subsistence practices, and political authority across the Upper Midwest (Whyte, 2018; Hill, 2017).

Ho-Chunk ecological governance was organized through seasonal cycles connecting hunting, fishing, plant harvesting, maple sugaring, and prairie stewardship. These activities were not simply methods of subsistence, but systems of governance that regulated relationships between people, land, and nonhuman life. Indigenous scholars emphasize that food systems within Indigenous societies are inseparable from sovereignty and territorial responsibility (Huambachano, 2024; Daigle, 2019).

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) a term formalized by Berkes (1993, 1999) represents a cumulative body of environmental understanding developed through generations of interaction with ecosystems. TEK integrates observation, ethical responsibility, and spiritual relationships with land and water, producing knowledge systems that guide sustainable ecological management. Rather than separating humans from nature, Indigenous epistemologies emphasize reciprocal relationships between humans and the broader ecological community *(Kimmerer, 2013; Hernandez, 2022)*.

Across North America, Indigenous communities-maintained ecosystems through practices such as controlled burning, wetland management, and rotational harvesting. Cultural burning, for example, was widely used to maintain prairie ecosystems, encourage the growth of food plants, and support wildlife populations essential to Indigenous subsistence systems. These practices promoted biodiversity and sustained productive landscapes long before modern environmental management institutions emerged (Adlam et al., 2022; Jolly et al., 2025).

Colonial governance later disrupted these practices. Settler authorities frequently criminalized Indigenous ecological stewardship while imposing new land management regimes oriented toward property ownership and agricultural

commodification. The suppression of cultural burning and other Indigenous land practices contributed not only to ecological change but also to the erosion of Indigenous territorial authority (Colenbaugh & Hagan, 2023).

Recognizing these ecological governance systems is essential for understanding the historical foundations of Madison's landscape. The prairies, wetlands, and forests surrounding the Madison isthmus were untouched wilderness prior to settlement. They were managed environments shaped through Indigenous stewardship practices that sustained food systems, cultural traditions, and political autonomy.

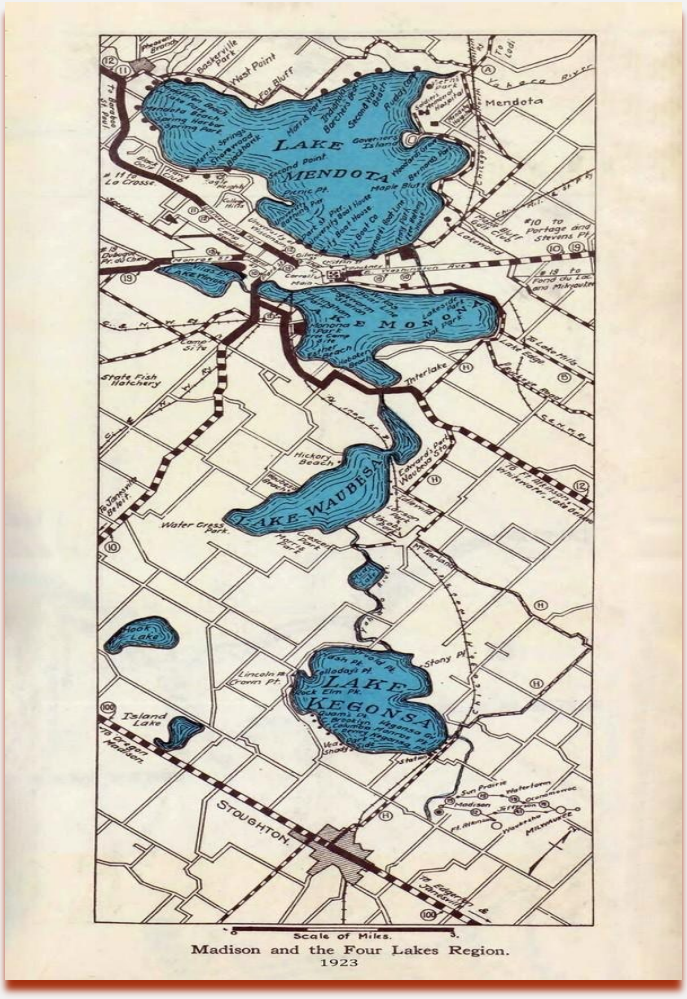


Figure 28: Historical map of the Four Lakes region surrounding Madison, Wisconsin. Source: Wisconsin Historical Society; Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Heritage Preservation.

Madison's contemporary food geography; including farmers markets, community agriculture initiatives, and sustainability branding, rests upon land that was historically governed through Indigenous ecological systems long before municipal planning institutions emerged. To analyze how these dynamics operate within Madison's planning system, the chapter first provides historical context on Ho-Chunk land governance and the settler colonial foundations of Madison's urban development. This historical grounding establishes the conditions through which contemporary planning institutions interpret land, sovereignty, and food systems. Building on this foundation, the analysis proceeds through three interrelated

lenses drawn from critical planning scholarship. The first lens examines how urban agriculture policies produce conditional legitimacy for food production within municipal zoning frameworks. The second lens analyzes how procedural neutrality within planning institutions narrows the scope of territorial debate by presenting jurisdictional simplification as administrative common sense. The third lens considers how narratives of "local food" and sustainability construct a civic identity that obscures the settler colonial foundations of Madison's food system and naturalizes existing spatial arrangements (Porter, 2010; Miraftab, 2009; Yiftachel, 2009).



Figure 29:Historical Ho-Chunk territory in the Upper Midwest. Source: Native Land Digital; Ho-Chunk Nation Historical Office.

6.2 Treaty Cessions and Forced Removal (1825–1874)

The transformation of Ho-Chunk territory into settler property occurred through a series of treaties and forced removals during the early nineteenth century. Prior to European colonization, Indigenous nations across North America functioned as sovereign political entities capable of negotiating diplomatic relationships with colonial governments. Early treaties often recognized Indigenous nations as legitimate political actors capable of conducting international diplomacy (EagleWoman & Leeds, 2013).

During the nineteenth century, U.S. federal policy shifted toward territorial acquisition and Indigenous displacement. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized the forced relocation of Indigenous communities from their ancestral lands to territories west of the Mississippi River. This policy initiated a period of mass displacement that reshaped Indigenous territorial governance across the continent.

For the Ho-Chunk Nation, this period involved a series of treaties that gradually transferred land in southern Wisconsin to the United States government. The Treaty of Prairie du Chien (1825) established territorial boundaries among Indigenous nations under federal supervision. The Treaty of 1832 transferred large portions of southern Wisconsin to the United States following the Black Hawk War. The Treaty of 1837 required Ho-Chunk communities to relocate west of the Mississippi River, while the Treaty of 1846 mandated further removal.

Between 1837 and 1874, the Ho-Chunk people were forcibly removed from Wisconsin multiple times to territories in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Despite these removals, many families repeatedly returned to their ancestral homeland in southern Wisconsin, demonstrating the enduring territorial connections between Indigenous communities and their lands (Wisconsin Historical Society; Hill, 2017).

The founding of Madison in 1836 occurred during this period of territorial restructuring. As Indigenous communities were displaced, settler institutions rapidly established new systems of land governance based on private property, cadastral surveying, and municipal incorporation. Surveying and platting practices replaced Indigenous territorial relationships with legally defined property boundaries. Land that had previously been governed through relational ecological systems became subdivided into parcels and transferred through property markets. Municipal planning institutions later built upon these property frameworks through zoning regulations, infrastructure development, and land-use planning. This transformation was not merely spatial. It was epistemic. Indigenous land governance systems were rendered invisible within emerging settler institutions, while cadastral mapping established property ownership as the dominant framework through which land could be governed and regulated (Scott, 1998; Porter, 2010).

Relocations of the Ho-Chunk Tribe



Figure 30: Ho-Chunk treaty cessions and removal routes during the nineteenth century. Source: Wisconsin Historical Society; Hill (2017). Hill, K. (2017). The Forced Removal of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

A series of treaties between 1825 and 1846 transferred Ho-Chunk territory in southern Wisconsin to the United States and forced repeated removals west of the Mississippi River.Despite these removals, Ho-Chunk families returned to Wisconsin after each displacement, with documented return migrations beginning in the 1830s and continuing through the 1860s and 1870s, eventually re-establishing a permanent homeland presence (Hill, 2017; Wisconsin Historical Society).

6.3 Settler Agriculture and the Narrative of Improvement

During the mid-nineteenth century, Wisconsin experienced rapid agricultural transformation. Prairie ecosystems maintained through Indigenous stewardship were converted into wheat fields and later into dairy farms. Wetlands were drained, forests cleared, and landscapes reorganized to support commodity agriculture (Whyte (2018)).

Settler agricultural expansion was justified through an ideology of "improvement," in which European American settlers framed agricultural development as the productive transformation of supposedly underutilized wilderness (Wolfe, 2006; O'Brien, 2010). Indigenous land management practices; including controlled burning, polyculture cultivation, and seasonal harvesting systems; were frequently dismissed as primitive or inefficient despite their ecological sophistication (Anderson, 2005; Kimmerer, 2013; Cronon, 1983).

Environmental historian William Cronon describes how nineteenth-century agricultural expansion transformed the ecosystems of the Midwest as settlers reorganized landscapes to support market-oriented production (Cronon, 1991). Indigenous stewardship practices were erased from public narratives, while settler agriculture became celebrated as modern progress.

James Scott's concept of state legibility helps explain this transformation. Modern states simplify complex social and ecological landscapes into standardized categories that can be mapped, measured, and administratively governed (Scott, 1998). In Wisconsin, cadastral surveys and agricultural development projects transformed landscapes into legible units of property ownership and economic productivity.

Settler agriculture therefore functioned both as an economic system and as a political narrative. It reorganized land use while simultaneously legitimizing territorial dispossession.

Madison's contemporary agricultural identity, including its celebrated dairy heritage and farm-to-table culture, emerged from this historical transformation.

6.4 Contemporary Land Distribution and Structural Imbalance

Settler agricultural expansion was justified through an ideology of "improvement," in which European American settlers framed agricultural development as the productive transformation of supposedly underutilized wilderness (Wolfe, 2006; O'Brien, 2010). Within this narrative, Indigenous land management practices, including controlled burning, polyculture cultivation, and seasonal harvesting systems were dismissed as primitive or inefficient, despite their ecological sophistication and long-standing role in sustaining biodiverse landscapes (Anderson, 2005; Kimmerer, 2013; Cronon, 1983).

Although the Ho-Chunk Nation maintains a strong cultural and political presence in the region, the territorial base that once supported Indigenous ecological governance has been dramatically reduced. Within Dane County specifically, Ho-Chunk-owned land represents well under one percent, approximately 0.1 to 0.2 percent, of the county's total land area, reflecting the profound territorial dispossession that followed nineteenth-century treaty cessions and forced removals.

Urban planning scholar Libby Porter argues that settler colonial planning systems frequently normalize territorial dispossession by embedding property regimes and land-use regulation within everyday governance practices (Porter, 2010). Municipal planning frameworks rarely acknowledge these historical foundations, instead presenting territorial governance as neutral administrative practices.

The absence of overt coercion does not indicate the absence of inequality. Instead, territorial transformation has become institutionalized within municipal planning systems.

Within the framework of this thesis, these land distribution patterns illustrate how colonial spatial governance becomes institutionalized through property regimes. Municipal zoning maps, property tax systems, and land-use planning institutions operate upon territorial arrangements that were originally produced through treaty cessions and forced removals. Over time, these arrangements become normalized within planning practice, allowing municipal governance to appear administratively neutral even though it rests upon historically unequal territorial foundations.

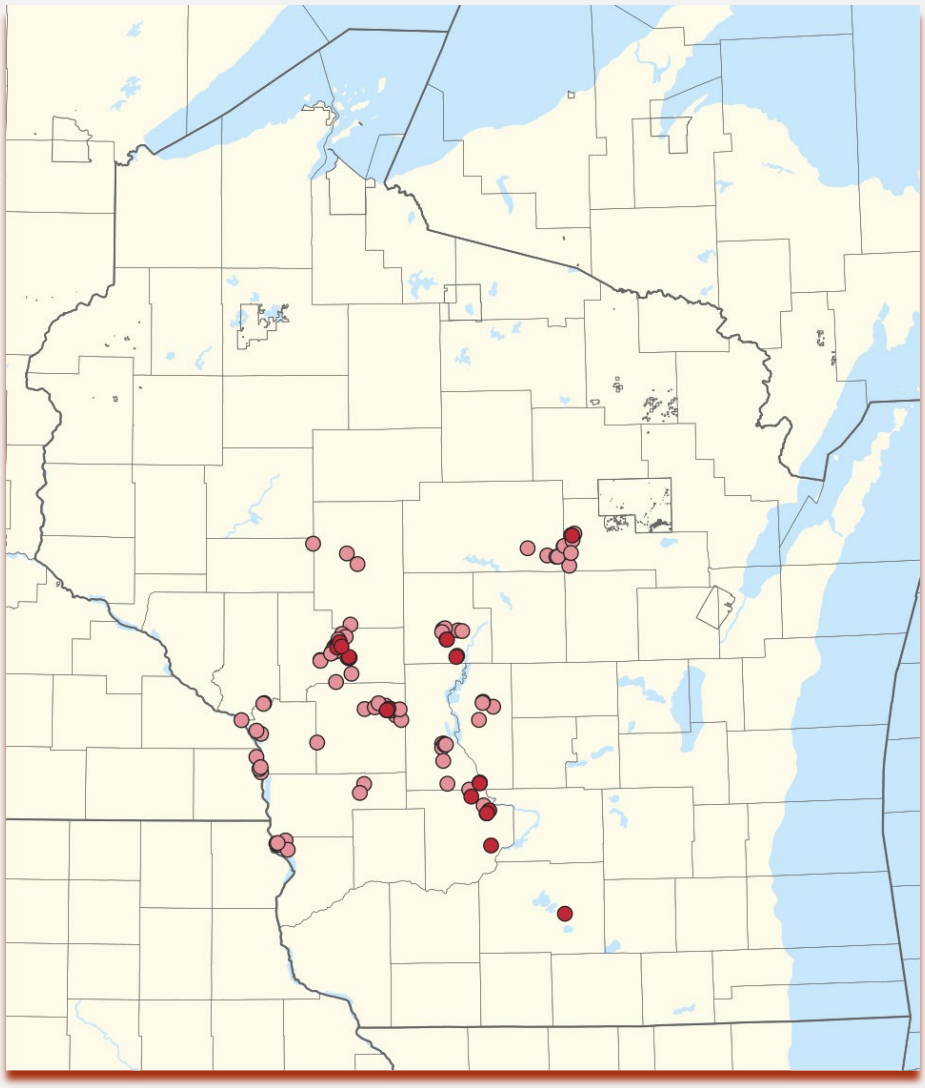


Figure 31:Contemporary Ho-Chunk land holdings in Wisconsin. Source: Ho-Chunk Nation Land Trust Office; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

6.5 Contemporary Ho-Chunk Land Reacquisition and Municipal Planning Tension

Despite historical dispossession, the Ho-Chunk Nation has pursued land reacquisition efforts aimed at restoring territorial presence within ancestral homelands. These initiatives involve purchasing land within Wisconsin and seeking federal trust status for certain parcels to strengthen tribal sovereignty and governance authority.

Land reacquisition efforts generate new interactions between tribal governments and municipal planning institutions, particularly as reacquired parcels intersect with existing zoning districts, transportation corridors, and service boundaries. These interactions become spatially visible in the placement of Ho-Chunk trust and fee lands within the City of Madison's Urban Service Area, which requires coordinated planning under the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission's Land Use and Water Quality Management Plan (CARPC, 2022). The City of Madison Comprehensive Plan (2018) similarly identifies tribal nations as intergovernmental partners and outlines procedures for consultation on land-use changes, annexation proposals, and infrastructure extensions. At the county scale, the Dane County Comprehensive Plan (2020) recognizes tribal governments within its intergovernmental cooperation framework, noting that land reacquisition may require negotiation over zoning jurisdiction, taxation, and service provision. These documents illustrate how intergovernmental agreements function as mechanisms for managing overlapping territorial claims, revealing the spatial layering that characterizes contemporary Ho-Chunk–municipal planning relations.

These negotiations illustrate how Indigenous sovereignty is often translated into administrative frameworks within municipal governance systems. Tribal authority may be formally recognized, yet it is mediated through municipal planning structures that continue to operate according to settler property regimes.

These interactions reveal the limits of municipal territorial sovereignty. They demonstrate that assumptions about municipal authority rest upon historical processes of dispossession that are rarely acknowledged within planning discourse.

6.6 Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Ecological Governance

Indigenous food sovereignty movements emphasize that food systems are inseparable from land governance, cultural continuity, and political autonomy. Food sovereignty involves the right of Indigenous communities to control land, water, seeds, and ecological management practices necessary for sustaining traditional lifeways (Corntassel, 2008; Daigle, 2019).

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) plays a central role in these systems. TEK reflects generations of observation, experimentation, and adaptation within specific ecosystems. It encompasses not only technical knowledge about plants and animals but also ethical principles governing human relationships with the environment.

Indigenous environmental knowledge systems emphasize reciprocal relationships between humans and the natural world. Environmental stewardship involves maintaining balance between human needs and ecological health. These relationships are embedded in cultural teachings, ceremonies, and subsistence practices that reinforce responsibilities toward land and other living beings (Kimmerer, 2013; Huambachano, 2024).

Across Wisconsin and the broader Great Lakes region, Indigenous communities have initiated numerous projects aimed at restoring traditional food systems. These initiatives illustrate how food sovereignty is inseparable from territorial governance. Programs led by Indigenous communities across the Great Lakes region increasingly focus on restoring

traditional foodways through land stewardship practices such as wild rice restoration, prairie burning, seed preservation, and the revitalization of traditional harvesting practices. For the Ho-Chunk Nation and other Indigenous communities, these efforts represent more than cultural revival. They are also political projects aimed at re-establishing relationships between food systems, land governance, and Indigenous sovereignty that were disrupted through colonial land dispossession (Whyte, 2018; Daigle, 2019; Huambachano, 2024).

In addition to cultural restoration initiatives, Indigenous food sovereignty efforts increasingly involve territorial strategies aimed at restoring land governance authority. One of the most visible examples of contemporary Ho-Chunk land reacquisition involves efforts to purchase land within Dane County and place it into federal trust status.

Under U.S. federal law, land held in trust for a federally recognized tribe is removed from most forms of state and municipal jurisdiction and is governed under tribal and federal authority. The Indian Reorganization Act authorizes the federal government to take land into trust and specifies that such land is exempt from state and local taxation (25 U.S.C. § 5108). Trust land is legally classified as "Indian Country," a jurisdictional category defined in federal statute that places primary authority with tribal and federal governments rather than state or municipal entities (18 U.S.C. § 1151). Recent Supreme Court decisions reaffirm this framework, emphasizing that tribal jurisdiction remains intact unless Congress clearly states otherwise (McGirt v. Oklahoma, 2020; Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta, 2022). As a result, the trust acquisition of land can restore limited territorial authority, enabling tribal governments to exercise greater control over land use, economic development, and cultural initiatives consistent with their constitutional powers (Ho-Chunk Nation Constitution, 2015; BIA Fee-to-Trust Handbook, 2016).

In the Madison region, several parcels acquired by the Ho-Chunk Nation have prompted negotiation with local planning institutions regarding zoning authority, infrastructure provision, and taxation. Municipal governments regulate land through zoning codes, review process development, and property taxation systems. When land is placed into federal trust, however, these municipal regulatory frameworks may no longer apply in the same way.

6.7 Lens One: Conditional Legitimacy and Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture in Madison is frequently celebrated as evidence of progressive urban planning. Women play an important role in sustaining many of Madison's local food initiatives. Community gardens, cooperative food networks, and neighborhood food justice organizations are often organized and maintained through the labor of women farmers, educators, and community organizers. Research on urban food movements in North American cities shows that women frequently occupy leadership roles in grassroots food initiatives focused on community agriculture, neighborhood food access, and environmental stewardship (Sbicca, 2018; Alkon & Guthman, 2017). These contributions help sustain Madison's reputation as a progressive center of local food culture, yet the gendered labor behind these initiatives often remains less visible within municipal planning frameworks that treat urban agriculture primarily as a land-use category rather than as a socially embedded system of food governance. The city's zoning code permits a wide range of food-producing activities, including community gardens, urban farms, hoop houses, beekeeping, and limited livestock keeping within residential districts. These policies are often presented as examples of innovative, sustainability-oriented planning designed to strengthen local food systems and promote environmental stewardship.

These policies represent an inclusive and forward-thinking approach to urban food governance. However, closer examination reveals that the legitimacy of food production within Madison's planning framework remains structured by municipal categories rather than by recognition of Indigenous sovereignty.

Urban agriculture becomes institutionally legitimate when it fits within zoning classifications that define acceptable land uses. Community gardens, farmers markets, and urban farms are permitted when they comply with municipal regulations governing land use, property ownership, and infrastructure access. Within this framework, food production becomes recognized and supported only when it operates within the regulatory boundaries of municipal governance.

Indigenous food systems, by contrast, are rarely embedded within these regulatory frameworks. While Indigenous knowledge and food traditions may be acknowledged symbolically through cultural programming or educational initiatives, they are not structurally integrated into zoning codes, municipal food policy, or land-use planning institutions. Indigenous ecological governance therefore exists outside the administrative categories that define legitimate land use within the city.

This produces a condition that can be described as conditional legitimacy. Local food systems are celebrated when they align with municipal planning categories, yet Indigenous land-based governance systems remain peripheral to the institutional structures that regulate food production.

Food sovereignty scholars emphasize that Indigenous food systems cannot be separated from territorial governance and land stewardship. Food sovereignty involves the restoration of Indigenous authority over land, water, and ecological systems necessary for sustaining traditional lifeways (Corntassel, 2008; Daigle, 2019; Huambachano, 2024).

Within Madison's planning framework, however, food governance is structured through property regimes rather than treaty-based territorial relationships. Indigenous sovereignty is therefore not directly contested within municipal planning institutions; instead, it is absent from the categories through which planning decisions are made.

In this sense, conditional legitimacy operates through institutional omission rather than explicit exclusion. Indigenous governance systems are not formally prohibited within Madison's planning framework; rather, they remain structurally outside the regulatory categories that define legitimate land use and food production.

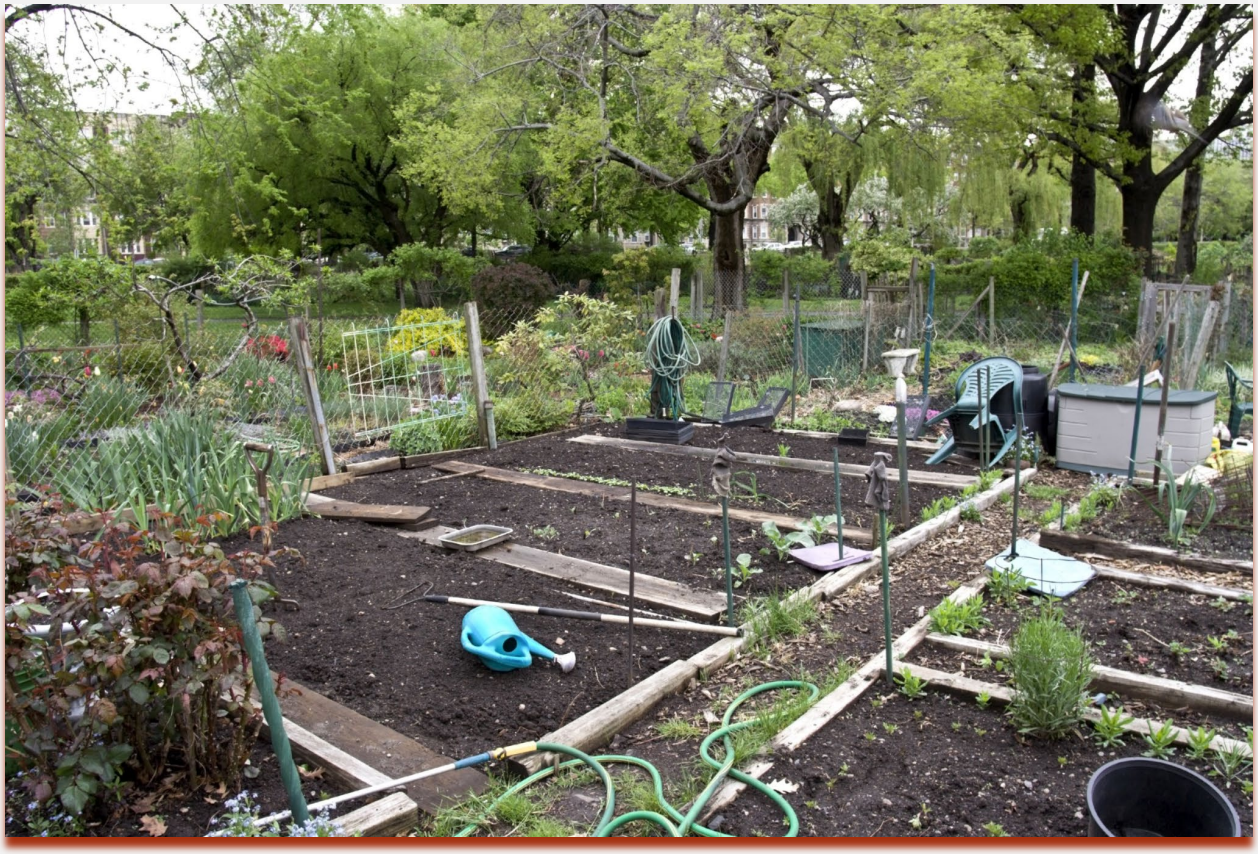


Figure 32: Community Garden in Madison, Wisconsin. Photography. Source: City of Madison Parks Division

Community gardens and urban agriculture initiatives are widely supported within Madison's municipal planning framework and are often promoted as examples of sustainability-oriented urban development. These spaces illustrate how food production becomes institutionally legitimate when it operates within municipal zoning regulations and property frameworks. Access to community gardens, however, is structured through municipal land-use controls, permitting processes, and organizational rules that determine who can participate. For example, the City of Madison Community Gardens Program requires gardeners to register annually, pay plot fees, and comply with site-specific management rules established by the Parks Division and partner organizations such as Community Groundworks (City of Madison Parks Division, 2023). Many gardens are located on city-owned land and are governed through lease agreements that restrict activities, limit structures, and prohibit certain forms of cultivation. These requirements reflect how community gardens remain embedded within settler planning institutions, where access is mediated by property ownership, municipal oversight, and administrative eligibility rather than Indigenous territorial governance. While such initiatives strengthen local food access, they also reveal how land control and regulatory authority continue to shape who can participate in Madison's "local food" landscape.

6.8 Lens Two: Procedural Neutrality and Jurisdictional Simplification

A second mechanism of shaping spatial governance in Madison involves the role of procedural neutrality within municipal planning processes. Madison's planning framework emphasizes participatory governance and public engagement.

Development proposals are reviewed through public hearings, plan commission meetings, neighborhood association consultations, and conditional use of permit processes.

These procedures reflect inclusive and democratic planning practices. Residents are invited to participate in planning debates, express concerns about development proposals, and influence land-use decisions. Such processes reinforce Madison's reputation as a city committed to participatory urban governance.

However, the scope of deliberation within these processes is structured by the administrative categories embedded in municipal planning systems. Planning debates occur within frameworks defined by zoning classifications, property ownership, infrastructure provision, and environmental regulation. Questions of territorial sovereignty and treaty rights rarely enter the deliberative space in which land-use decisions are made.

James Scott's analysis of administrative legibility provides a useful framework for understanding this dynamic. Modern states simplify complex social and ecological realities into standardized categories that can be managed bureaucratically (Scott, 1998). Zoning maps, land-use classifications, and property boundaries transform territory into legible units that can be regulated through municipal governance.

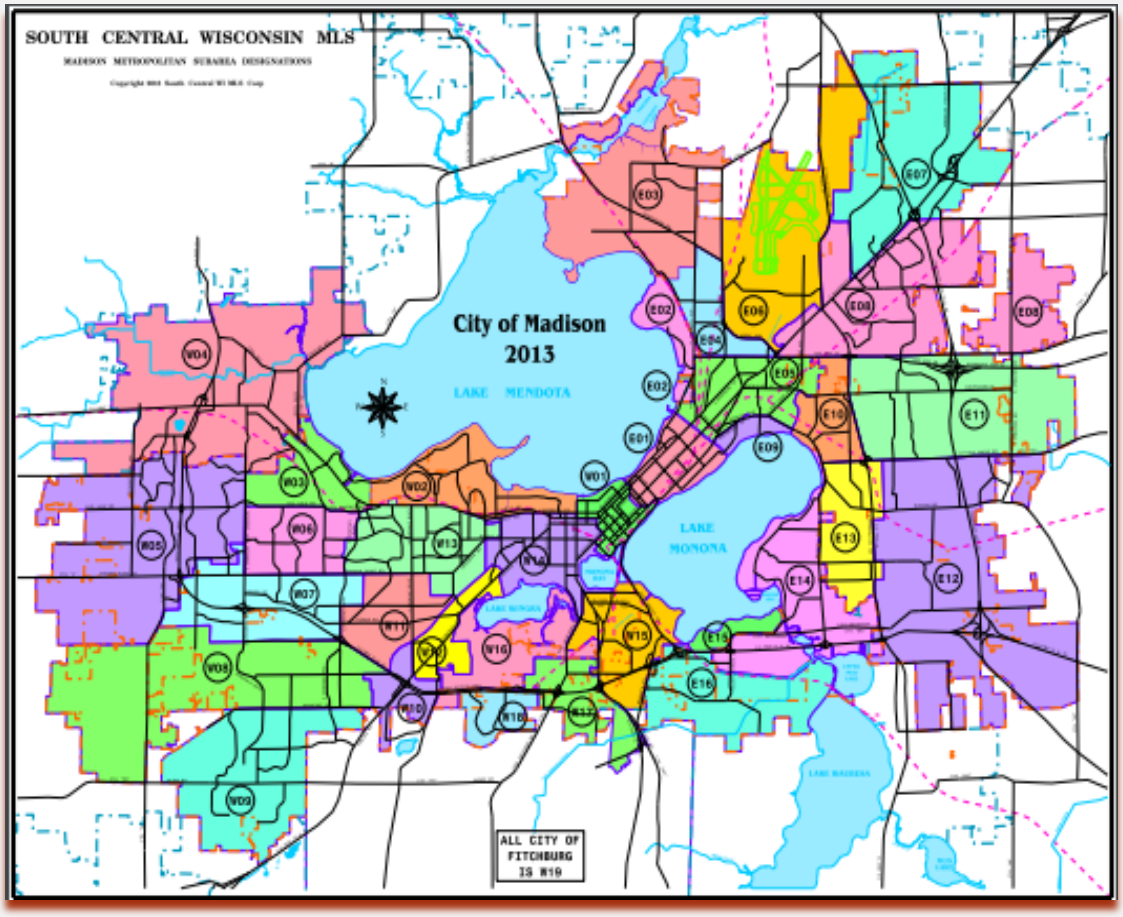


Figure 33:Municipal zoning map of Madison, Wisconsin. Source: City of Madison Planning Division, Zoning Map.

Zoning maps function as key instruments of territorial governance within municipal planning systems. Land is categorized into administratively legible units such as residential, commercial, and industrial districts, allowing municipal authorities to regulate development, density, and land use through standardized planning classifications.

In Madison, the zoning map operates as a central instrument through which territorial governance is organized. Planning debates concerning development proposals typically focus on issues such as density, transportation access, environmental impacts, and neighborhood compatibility. These discussions occur within the administrative categories defined by zoning regulations and implicitly assume the legitimacy of municipal authority over the land being governed.

As a result, treaty history and Indigenous sovereignty claims remain outside the scope of everyday planning deliberation. This dynamic illustrates how procedural neutrality can function as a form of power. When planning processes treat territorial authority as historically settled, foundational inequalities embedded within land governance remain beyond the boundaries of democratic debate.

Food systems operate entirely within this normalized planning framework. Farmers' markets, community gardens, cooperative grocery networks, and urban agriculture initiatives function within municipal planning categories that assume the legitimacy of settler property regimes. Thus, participatory planning processes can coexist with deeper territorial asymmetries that remain institutionally unaddressed.

Thus, participatory planning processes can coexist with deeper territorial asymmetries that remain institutionally unaddressed.

6.9 Lens Three: Narrative Framing and the Construction of “Local Food” Identity

Madison is nationally recognized for its vibrant local food culture. The Dane County Farmers’ Market, widely considered one of the largest producer-only farmers markets in the United States, serves as a central symbol of the city’s agricultural identity. Cooperative grocery stores, farm-to-table restaurants, and regional agricultural networks further reinforce Madison’s reputation as a leader in sustainable food systems.

These institutions contribute to a powerful civic narrative celebrating ethical consumption, environmental responsibility, and regional agriculture. Within this narrative, Madison’s food system is often portrayed as evidence of progressive planning and strong community engagement.

However, the concept of “local food” frequently begins historically with the development of nineteenth-century settler agriculture. Dairy farming, family-owned farms, and regional agricultural production have become the foundation of Madison’s food identity. Indigenous ecological governance systems that preceded settler agriculture are rarely incorporated into this narrative.

This produces a selective understanding of locality. The concept of “local” food becomes a moral and ecological category detached from the territorial transformations that made modern agriculture possible. Importantly, this dynamic does not involve explicit factual inaccuracies. The farms supplying Madison’s markets do exist, and local agriculture is an important component of the regional economy. Distortion occurs through selective narrative framing.

Agricultural abundance is foregrounded while Indigenous dispossession remains backgrounded. Sustainability discourse celebrates ecological stewardship without confronting the historical restructuring of land governance that replaced Indigenous ecological systems with settler agricultural regimes.

Planning scholar Libby Porter describes this process as a feature of settler colonial planning systems, in which historical dispossession becomes normalized within everyday governance practices (Porter, 2010). Within the framework of this thesis, this narrative compression constitutes a form of misinformation. By presenting local food systems as natural expressions of regional agricultural heritage, planning discourse obscures the historical processes through which settler sovereignty became spatially entrenched.

In this sense, the narrative of local food does not necessarily produce false information. Rather, it narrows historical interpretation by foregrounding settler agricultural heritage while backgrounding Indigenous land governance. This selective framing exemplifies the form of structural misinformation examined throughout this thesis.



Figure 34:Dane County Farmers' Market on Capitol Square in Madison. Source: Photograph: Dane County Farmers' Market Association or Wikimedia Commons – Capitol Square Farmers Market.

6.10 Food Systems as Spatial Barometers

Food systems provide a powerful analytical lens for examining spatial governance because they depend directly on land access, infrastructure networks, and regulatory recognition.

Agricultural production requires secure land tenure, water access, and ecological stewardship. Food distribution relies on transportation networks, marketplaces, and regulatory approval. For this reason, food systems often reveal underlying spatial inequalities that remain less visible in other sectors of urban governance.

In Madison, food systems appear vibrant and successful. Madison's food system is also shaped by immigrant agricultural communities that contribute significantly to regional food production. Hmong farmers, many of whom arrived in Wisconsin as refugees from Southeast Asia during the late twentieth century, have become prominent participants in farmers' markets across the state, including the Dane County Farmers' Market. These farmers often cultivate diversified vegetable crops using small-scale farming practices that differ from the dairy-focused agriculture historically associated with Wisconsin's agricultural economy (Vang, 2010; Minkoff-Zern, 2014). While their contributions enrich the diversity of Madison's food system, immigrant agricultural labor is often incorporated into broader narratives of "local food" without acknowledging the migration histories and structural inequalities that shape participation in regional agriculture. Farmers' markets flourish, urban agriculture initiatives expand, and sustainability programs receive strong public support. These features reinforce the city's reputation as a progressive center of food policy innovation.

Yet the territorial foundation upon which this food systems operate reflects the historical displacement of Indigenous governance systems. Municipal planning authority over land that once formed part of the Ho-Chunk homeland remains uncontested within contemporary planning discourse. Food systems therefore function as spatial barometers, revealing whose land governance practices are institutionally recognized and whose remain structurally marginalized.

In Madison, settler agricultural systems receive regulatory support and policy recognition, while Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives remain peripheral to municipal planning institutions. The spatial organization of food systems therefore reflects deeper patterns of territorial power embedded within contemporary urban governance**.**

6.11 Gray Space in Madison: Recognition Without Redistribution

The Madison case illustrates a distinct form of gray space within the comparative framework of this thesis. Unlike the militarized gray spaces of Hebron or the informal-developmental gray spaces of Cape Town, Madison produces a form of settler-normalized gray space.

The Ho-Chunk Nation is federally recognized as a sovereign tribal government. In recent years, public institutions in Madison, including the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the City of Madison, have increasingly incorporated land acknowledgment statements recognizing that the city sits on the ancestral homeland of the Ho-Chunk Nation. While these acknowledgments represent an important symbolic recognition of Indigenous history, scholars of Indigenous governance note that such gestures often remain disconnected from substantive changes in land governance or territorial authority (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Whyte, 2018). In this sense, land acknowledgments illustrate the dynamic described in this chapter as recognition without redistribution: Indigenous presence is publicly recognized while municipal planning authority over land remains unchanged. Land acknowledgments recognize Indigenous history in public institutions, and cultural programming increasingly highlights Indigenous presence within Wisconsin.

Yet municipal planning authority over land remains structured through settler property regimes. Treaty sovereignty is acknowledged symbolically but rarely embedded within zoning frameworks, food planning policies, or land-use governance institutions.

This condition can be described as recognition without redistribution. Indigenous presence is acknowledged, but territorial authority remains unchanged. Land reacquisition efforts by the Ho-Chunk Nation restore fragments of ancestral territory but remain spatially fragmented and administratively mediated through municipal planning systems.

Gray space in Madison therefore operates through administrative containment rather than overt restriction. Sovereignty exists but is constrained within the boundaries of municipal regulatory frameworks. Narrative framing reinforces this arrangement by presenting sustainability initiatives and local food movements as evidence of progressive governance while leaving deeper territorial inequalities unexamined.

Across the three cases examined in this thesis, Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison, different forms of gray space emerge through distinct governance regimes. Yet each case reveals how narrative framing contributes to the stabilization of spatial inequality. Food systems make these dynamics visible because they connect land governance, cultural practice, and everyday survival.

Through this lens, misinformation emerges not merely as inaccurate information but as a structural feature of spatial governance itself.

Madison therefore reveals a distinct form of spatial governance within the comparative framework of this thesis. Unlike Hebron, where territorial control is maintained through military administration, or Cape Town, where apartheid spatial planning continues to structure urban inequality, Madison illustrates how settler colonial land regimes become normalized within liberal democratic institutions. Planning authority appears neutral and technocratic, yet it operates upon territorial arrangements produced through historical dispossession. Through narrative framing, institutional omission, and procedural neutrality, spatial inequality becomes embedded within everyday governance practices.

6.12 Answering the Research Question

This thesis asks:

How does misinformation function as a form of power in urban planning, particularly in shaping food systems within colonial and settler-colonial contexts?

The Madison case demonstrates that misinformation can operate through normalization rather than overt coercion.

Unlike Hebron, where spatial governance operates through military occupation, or Cape Town, where apartheid spatial planning continues to shape urban inequality, Madison illustrates how settler territorial governance becomes normalized within liberal democratic institutions.

Here, misinformation functions through narrative framing and institutional omission rather than through explicit repression. Planning discourse emphasizes sustainability, local food systems, and participatory governance while leaving treaty history and Indigenous sovereignty outside the categories through which planning authority operates.

This produces several mechanisms of informational distortion, including:

- the civilizational framing of settler agriculture as progress
- the omission of treaty history from municipal planning categories

- sustainability narratives that substitute for territorial restitution
- forms of procedural neutrality that obscure historical dispossession

Through these mechanisms, territorial inequality becomes normalized within everyday planning practices.

Food systems make these dynamics particularly visible because they depend directly on land governance.

Settler Land Regime

↓

Municipal Planning

↓

Sustainability Narrative

↓

Local Food Identity

↓

Normalization of Territorial Dispossession

Figure 35: Narrative Framing and Settler Planning Normalization. Source: Author's diagram based on Porter (2010), Scott (1998), and Corntassel (2008).

Chapter 7: Comparative Analysis: Misinformation as Spatial Governance

7.1 Reframing the Research Question

This thesis has examined how food systems in Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison reveal the relationship between narrative framing, land governance, and spatial inequality. The central research question guiding this inquiry asks: How does misinformation function as a form of power in urban planning, particularly in shaping food systems within colonial and postcolonial contexts?

The preceding chapters demonstrate that misinformation within planning systems rarely appears as simple factual error, rumor, or digital disinformation. Instead, this thesis argues that misinformation often operates structurally through narrative framing that shapes how land, legality, sovereignty, and legitimacy are interpreted within planning institutions. In each case examined in this study, narrative does not merely accompany planning decisions; it stabilizes them. Narrative frameworks define what appears reasonable, necessary, or inevitable within planning practice. Through this process, historically produced inequalities have become normalized as administrative common sense.

This chapter synthesizes the findings of the three case studies through a comparative analytical framework. Rather than asking whether misinformation appears within each city, the comparative question guiding this chapter is: What forms does narrative power take across different governance regimes, and how does it reorganize food systems spatially?

The cases examined in this thesis operate within very different institutional environments. Hebron exists under conditions of militarized occupation and fragmented sovereignty. Cape Town reflects the spatial legacy of apartheid urban planning within a contemporary neoliberal governance framework. Madison operates within a liberal democratic planning system embedded in the historical context of settler colonial land dispossession. These contexts are not interchangeable. However, the comparative analysis demonstrates that narrative framing first shapes how land-use decisions are made, and these decisions subsequently stabilize and reproduce spatial inequality across the three cases.

Food systems provide a particularly revealing lens through which to examine these dynamics. Food production depends on land tenure, security, ecological access, and agricultural infrastructure. Food circulation depends on transportation networks, marketplaces, and regulatory recognition. For this reason, food systems often function as early indicators of deeper spatial inequalities embedded within planning systems. When narrative frameworks shift, food systems reorganize accordingly.

7.2 Comparative Design and Case Logic

This thesis adopts a comparative design based on variation across governance regimes rather than similarity between cases. Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison represent three distinct configurations of colonial and postcolonial spatial governance.

Hebron illustrates militarized settler-colonial governance structured through fragmented sovereignty, permit regimes, and security-based spatial control. Planning authorities operate through military-administrative mechanisms that regulate land classification, infrastructure access, and agricultural activity. Madison represents liberal settlers for municipal governance. Its planning institutions emphasize participatory governance, sustainability discourse, and progressive urban policy, yet these institutions operate upon territorial foundations produced through Indigenous dispossession and treaty-era displacement. Indigenous sovereignty is acknowledged symbolically but rarely integrated into land-use or food governance frameworks.

Cape Town reflects the enduring spatial legacy of apartheid urban planning within a contemporary post-apartheid governance context. Municipal regulation of informal food trade, mobility inequality, and development pressure on agricultural land continue to operate within a historically racialized urban landscape.

These cases were selected not to demonstrate identical conditions but to reveal how different governance structures produce comparable narrative effects. In Hebron, narrative framing centers on security, legality, and environmental protection. In Cape Town, it centers on disorder, informality, and development inevitability. In Madison, it centers sustainability, neutrality, and heritage of localism. Despite these differences, narrative framing in each case transforms historically produced spatial inequalities into administratively rational planning practices.

7.3 Cross-Case Comparison Through the Three Analytical Lenses

The previous chapters analyzed each case through three analytical lenses: conditional legitimacy, market and mobility governance, and narrative logic. Examining these lenses comparatively allows the thesis to identify recurring mechanisms through which narrative framing becomes embedded within spatial governance.

Historical Power Structure

(colonial / apartheid / settler)

↓

Planning Institution

(military administration / municipal planning)

↓

Narrative Framing ← Lens 3: Narrative Logic

(security / development / sustainability)

↓

Regulatory Mechanism ← Lens 1: Conditional Legitimacy

(permits / enforcement / zoning)

↓

Food System Outcomes

(access, mobility, legitimacy)

↓

Spatial Inequality

Figure 36: Narrative Power in Spatial Governance Across Cases. Source: Author's diagram

7.3.1 Lens One: Conditional Legitimacy and the Regulation of Food Production

Lens One examines how regulatory mechanisms; permits, enforcement systems, and zoning produce conditional legitimacy for food production across the three cases. Across all three contexts, food production is not categorically prohibited; instead, it is rendered conditional. Legitimacy is administratively granted but remains structurally unstable because it depends on compliance with regulatory systems shaped by colonial, apartheid, or settler land regimes.

Hebron: Mechanisms of Militarized Conditionality

In Hebron, conditional legitimacy is produced through military permit regimes, access to coordination requirements, and demolition of authority. These mechanisms include:

- permits for agricultural structures and water infrastructure
- military-controlled access schedules for olive groves
- demolition orders for unpermitted structures
- movement restrictions that determine when and where farmers may cultivate

Together, these mechanisms create a condition of suspended legality, where cultivation is technically allowed but always vulnerable to revocation.

Cape Town: Mechanisms of Municipal Enforcement and Informality Governance

In Cape Town, conditional legitimacy emerges through municipal by-laws, trading permits, and selective enforcement that govern informal food economies. Key mechanisms include:

- street-trading permits issued by the City of Cape Town
- by-law restrictions on location, mobility, and hours of operation
- confiscation of goods during enforcement sweeps
- spatial zoning that limits where informal trade is permitted

These mechanisms authorize informal food trade while simultaneously exposing traders to enforcement risk, producing a condition of tolerated precarity.

Madison: Mechanisms of Liberal Recognition Without Territorial Redistribution

In Madison, conditional legitimacy takes shape through zoning ordinances, permitting systems, and municipal sustainability frameworks that support urban agriculture while excluding Indigenous territorial governance. Mechanisms include:

- zoning categories that permit community gardens and urban farms

- municipal oversight of garden access, plot allocation, and land use
- sustainability policies that celebrate local food but do not redistribute land
- symbolic recognition (e.g., land acknowledgments) without jurisdictional authority

These mechanisms generate a form of liberal conditionality, where food production is encouraged but Indigenous land-based governance remains structurally outside municipal planning authority.

Cross-Case Synthesis: How Conditional Legitimacy Is Produced

Across the three cases, the mechanisms differ: military administration in Hebron, municipal enforcement in Cape Town, and liberal zoning frameworks in Madison. Yet each case arrives at conditional legitimacy through a similar process:

1. Narrative framing defines what forms of food production are seen as legitimate.
2. Regulatory mechanisms operate framing through permits, zoning, or enforcement.
3. Administrative discretion determines who receives access, under what conditions, and with what vulnerabilities.

Thus, conditional legitimacy is not an accidental outcome but a governance strategy that regulates food production through partial recognition and controlled inclusion.

7.3.2 Lens Two: Market Governance and Mobility Control

Markets function as critical infrastructural nodes connecting food production to urban consumption. Across the cases examined in this thesis, control over circulation; whether through checkpoints, spatial distance, or regulatory certification; plays a central role in shaping food economies.

In Hebron, the closure of Shuhada Street and the division of the city into H1 and H2 zones fragment commercial corridors. Checkpoints, surveillance infrastructure, and movement restrictions disrupt traditional market circulation patterns. Over time, these mobility restrictions contribute to commercial decline in sections of the Old City. Yet this decline is frequently framed through narratives of instability or disorder rather than through recognition of the infrastructural restrictions that produced it.

In Cape Town, apartheid spatial planning placed Black townships far from economic centers. Although apartheid legislation formally ended in 1994, the spatial structure of the city continues to reflect this historical separation. Residents of townships such as Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain must travel significant distances to access major retail centers. Informal traders fill gaps within township food economies, yet mobility barriers and infrastructure inequality continue to shape food access.

In Madison, market governance operates through regulatory certification and civic branding. Farmers' markets; particularly the Dane County Farmers' Market, widely promoted as the largest producer-only market in the United States; are celebrated as civic institutions that embody local identity and sustainability. Participation is regulated through producer-only certification, vendor permitting, and municipal event regulations. These markets are also embedded within broader civic branding efforts, including "Buy Local" campaigns, Destination Madison's marketing of farmers' markets as cultural attractions, and the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan's framing of local food systems as markers of sustainability and

community vitality. Through these forms of branding, food circulation is positioned as part of a celebrated civic identity, reinforcing the legitimacy of municipal governance and the regulatory frameworks that structure participation.

Across all three cases, mobility infrastructure is not neutral. Circulation patterns shape where food can be produced, sold, and accessed. Narrative framing stabilizes these outcomes by presenting them as rational governance. In Hebron, spatial restriction is justified through security discourse. In Cape Town, enforcement and infrastructure inequality are framed through narratives of urban order and development. In Madison, regulatory certification and civic branding, such as the producer-only identity of the Dane County Farmers' Market and the city's sustainability messaging; reinforce the legitimacy of municipal governance and the spatial arrangements it produces.

7.3.3 Lens Three: Narrative Logics as Planning Authority

The most striking cross-case finding of this thesis lies in the role of narrative framing as a mechanism of planning authority. Although the content of dominant narratives differs across cases, their structural function remains consistent: they legitimize spatial inequality by presenting historically contingent arrangements as administratively rational.

In Hebron, security discourse and environmental protection narratives justify agricultural coordination regimes, permit restrictions, and spatial fragmentation. The language of security transforms asymmetrical governance arrangements into protective necessity.

In Cape Town, narratives of disorder and development frame informal food economies as problems requiring regulation and agricultural land as underutilized development potential. These narratives obscure the structural legacy of apartheid spatial planning that produced contemporary inequalities.

In Madison, sustainability discourse, and heritage localism frame settler agricultural systems as natural expressions of regional identity. Farmers' markets, farm-to-table cuisine, and regional agriculture are celebrated as symbols of progressive food culture. Yet this narrative framework often begins historically with nineteenth-century settler agriculture, leaving Indigenous ecological governance absent from contemporary planning discourse.

Across the three cases, misinformation operates not primarily through explicit falsehood but through narrative mechanisms such as selective emphasis, omission of structural inequality, historical compression, and translation of political power into administrative necessity.

7.4 Participation, Power, and Knowledge Legitimacy

Across all three cases, narrative framing shapes not only policy outcomes but also the boundaries of participation within planning systems.

In Hebron, participatory planning is structurally constrained by militarized governance. Security discourse limits the range of contests available within planning debates.

In Cape Town, informal traders and township residents may participate in public hearings and consultations. However, narratives of disorder often shape whose knowledge is treated as legitimate within these processes.

In Madison, planning institutions emphasize participatory governance and community engagement. Yet treaty sovereignty and Indigenous territorial authority remain absent from the categories through which planning decisions are made.

These cases demonstrate that participation in planning processes occurs within epistemic boundaries defined by institutional narratives.

7.5 Typology of Planning Misinformation

The comparative analysis identifies three dominant forms of planning misinformation: securitized framing, developmental compression, and liberal normalization. Although these forms differ in content and institutional context, they share a common structural function: they transform historically produced inequalities into administratively rational planning outcomes. Understanding these mechanisms is essential for planners because they reveal how planning systems can reproduce harm even when operating under the language of safety, development, or sustainability.

1. Securitized Framing (Hebron)

Mechanism: Security discourse frames spatial restriction, mobility control, and agricultural regulation as necessary protective measures. This framing obscures the political nature of territorial control and recasts coercive spatial practices as technical risk management.

Why planners should care:

- Security language can mask structural violence. Planners must recognize when "safety" is being used to justify exclusion, displacement, or surveillance.
- Risk-based planning can become a tool of territorial domination. Even in democratic contexts, emergency powers and policing rationales can be mobilized to restrict mobility or land use.
- Security narratives foreclose alternative futures. When framed as non-negotiable, they limit public debate and democratic oversight.

Broad lesson: Planners must interrogate how "security" is defined, who defines it, and whose mobility or land access is restricted in its name.

2. Developmental Compression (Cape Town)

Mechanism: Narratives of modernization, economic growth, and urban order compress historical timelines, presenting apartheid spatial inequality as a legacy that can be overcome through development rather than as an ongoing structural condition.

Why planners should care:

- Development discourse can depoliticize inequality. When framed as a technical challenge, structural injustice becomes invisible within planning processes.
- Infrastructure investment can reinforce old geographies. Without redistributive intent, development reproduces spatial separation rather than repairing it.

- Informal economies become framed as “problems” rather than survival systems. This leads to enforcement-heavy approaches rather than supportive planning.

Broad lesson: Planners must resist narratives that treat inequality as a historical residue and instead recognize how planning decisions actively reproduce or disrupt spatial injustice.

3. Liberal Normalization (Madison)

Mechanism: Sustainability discourse, local food branding, and procedural neutrality normalize settler territorial governance by celebrating civic identity while leaving Indigenous sovereignty structurally peripheral.

Why planners should care:

- Sustainability can obscure land dispossession. Green planning frameworks often celebrate local food systems without addressing whose land is being used and under what authority.
- Procedural neutrality is not neutral. When planning processes assume settler property regimes as the baseline, Indigenous governance is excluded by design.
- Civic branding can naturalize inequitable governance. Farmers’ markets, “Buy Local” campaigns, and sustainability messaging can reinforce legitimacy for systems that do not redistribute land or authority.

Broad lesson: Planners must examine how progressive planning narratives can reproduce settlers for colonial structures even when they appear inclusive or community oriented.

Cross-Case Insight: Why This Typology Matters for Planning

Across the three cases, these forms of misinformation share a common structural function:

- They convert political inequalities into technical planning problems.
- They stabilize unequal spatial arrangements by framing them as rational, necessary, or natural.
- They limit the range of possible interventions by foreclosing alternative narratives.

Why planners should care: Because misinformation in planning is not simply about false facts; it is false frames. These frames shape:

- what problems are seen as legitimate
- what solutions are considered possible
- whose knowledge counts
- whose land claims are recognized
- whose mobility is protected or restricted

Recognizing these mechanisms allows planners to identify when planning tools are being used to reproduce inequality and to intervene more ethically, transparently, and historically aware.

7.6 Revisiting the Research Question

This thesis asked how misinformation functions as a form of power in urban planning. Comparative analysis demonstrates that misinformation operates not primarily through factual distortion but through narrative framing embedded within planning institutions.

Across militarized, post-apartheid, and liberal governance contexts, narrative framing stabilizes spatial inequality by shaping how land governance is interpreted. Food systems reveal these dynamics because they depend directly on land access, mobility infrastructure, and regulatory legitimacy.

When narrative framing presents historically contingent spatial arrangements as inevitable, planning institutions reproduce territorial inequality while maintaining administrative credibility. In this sense, misinformation operates as a structural feature of spatial governance.

7.7 Food Systems as Spatial Indicators of Governance

Across the three cases examined in this thesis, food systems function as particularly revealing indicators of spatial governance. Because food production, distribution, and exchange depend directly on land access, infrastructure networks, and regulatory legitimacy, food systems often reveal underlying spatial inequalities that remain less visible in other sectors of urban planning.

Agricultural production requires secure land tenure, ecological access, and infrastructure such as water systems and storage facilities. Food circulation requires transportation networks, marketplaces, and regulatory approval. When these conditions become unstable or unevenly distributed, food systems are often among the first sectors to reflect the resulting spatial disruptions.

In Hebron, food systems reveal the consequences of militarized spatial governance. Agricultural production depends on land access in fragmented territorial districts. Olive harvests are subject to coordination regimes, and agricultural infrastructure remains vulnerable to demolition under permit regulations. Markets within the Old City experience decline as mobility restrictions disrupt circulation between commercial corridors and surrounding rural areas.

In Cape Town, food systems reveal the enduring spatial legacy of apartheid urban planning. Informal traders and township-based food markets provide essential access to fresh produce for communities located far from major commercial centers. Yet these food economies operate within regulatory environments that simultaneously permit and restrict their activities. Municipal enforcement campaigns targeting informal trade illustrate how planning institutions regulate survival economies while maintaining narratives of urban order and modernization.

In Madison, food systems reveal a different form of spatial governance. Farmers' markets, urban agriculture initiatives, and local food movements are widely celebrated as examples of progressive planning and community sustainability. However, the territorial foundations upon which this food systems operate reflect historical processes of Indigenous land dispossession. Contemporary planning institutions acknowledge this history symbolically but rarely integrate treaty sovereignty into the regulatory frameworks governing land use and food policy.

Across the three cases, food systems function as spatial barometers of governance regimes. They reveal how planning authority operates through land classification, infrastructure access, and regulatory recognition. When these conditions shift, food systems reorganize accordingly.

These dynamics also reveal a broader condition shared across the cases: each governance regime produces forms of partial recognition and administrative ambiguity that can be understood through the concept of gray space.

7.8 Gray Space Across Governance Regimes

A central concept linking the three case studies in this thesis is the notion of gray space. Yiftachel (2009) describes gray spaces as areas suspended between legality and illegality, recognition, and erasure. These spaces are neither fully incorporated within formal governance structures nor entirely excluded from them. Instead, they exist in conditions of administrative ambiguity where legality becomes conditional, and enforcement remains uneven.

In Hebron, gray space emerges through militarized permit regimes and fragmented sovereignty. Agricultural land, markets, and residential areas exist within a landscape divided between multiple administrative authorities. Farmers may cultivate olive groves yet require military coordination to access them. Infrastructure may exist yet remain vulnerable to demolition due to permit restrictions. Markets may operate yet remain partially inaccessible due to checkpoint infrastructure. Gray space in this context is produced through militarized administrative control.

In Cape Town, gray space emerges through municipal regulation of informal economies. Informal food traders operate legally within designated areas yet face confiscation and enforcement when operating outside those spaces. Agricultural land such as the Philippi Horticultural Area remains zoned for farming yet faces ongoing development pressure. Informality is tolerated but structurally precarious. Gray space therefore emerges through the interaction between municipal regulation and market-driven urban development.

In Madison, gray space takes a different form. Indigenous sovereignty is formally recognized within federal law, and land acknowledgments increasingly appear in public institutions. However, municipal planning authority continues to operate within property regimes that emerged through nineteenth-century territorial dispossession. Indigenous presence is acknowledged symbolically yet rarely embedded within zoning frameworks or land-use governance institutions. Gray space in this context emerges through recognition without redistribution.

Although the mechanisms differ across cases, the concept of gray space reveals how planning systems maintain conditions of partial recognition. Legitimacy is not uniformly granted but mediated through administrative frameworks shaped by historical power relations.

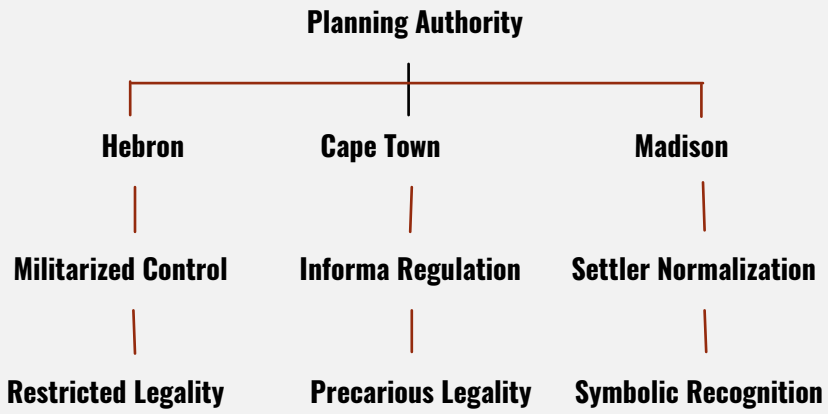


Figure 37:Gray Space Across Governance Regimes. Source: Author's diagram

7.9 Narrative Power and the Normalization of Spatial Inequality

The comparative analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that narrative framing plays a central role in stabilizing spatial governance regimes. Across the cases examined in this thesis, dominant narratives transform historically produced spatial inequalities into administratively rational planning outcomes.

In Hebron, security discourse frames spatial restrictions as protective measures necessary for maintaining public safety. Agricultural coordination regimes, checkpoint infrastructure, and street closures are justified through narratives of threat prevention. These narratives obscure the structural asymmetry embedded within territorial governance under occupation.

In Cape Town, narratives of urban order and economic development frame informal food economies as problems requiring regulation and agricultural land as underutilized development potential. These narratives obscure the structural legacy of apartheid spatial planning that continues to shape contemporary urban inequality.

In Madison, sustainability discourse, and local food branding frame settler agricultural systems as natural expressions of regional identity. Farmers' markets and farm-to-table culture are celebrated as symbols of progressive food governance. However, these narratives often begin historically with nineteenth-century settler agriculture, leaving Indigenous ecological governance absent from contemporary planning discourse.

Across these contexts, misinformation does not primarily take the form of fabricated facts. Instead, it operates through selective emphasis, historical compression, and omission of structural inequality. By shaping the interpretive frameworks through which planning decisions are understood, narrative framing stabilizes spatial governance regimes.

7.10 Synthesis: Misinformation as Spatial Governance

The comparative analysis presented in this chapter supports the central argument of this thesis: misinformation functions as a structural feature of spatial governance within planning systems.

Across militarized occupation, post-apartheid urban governance, and liberal democratic planning regimes, narrative framing plays a critical role in stabilizing territorial authority. Security discourse, development of rhetoric, and sustainability

narratives each transform historically contingent land governance arrangements into administratively rational planning practices.

Food systems reveal these dynamics particularly clearly because they connect land access, infrastructure networks, and regulatory recognition. When planning institutions restructure land governance, food systems are often among the first sectors to reflect these changes.

This thesis therefore demonstrates that misinformation within planning does not operate solely through digital disinformation or isolated factual inaccuracies. Instead, misinformation often emerges through institutional narrative framing that shapes spatial governance.

Understanding misinformation as a structural feature of planning practice expands the analytical scope of both misinformation research and urban planning theory. It reveals how narrative power contributes to the stabilization of spatial inequality across diverse governance regimes and shows why food systems provide a particularly effective lens for tracing these dynamics across colonial, postcolonial, and settler-colonial contexts

To clarify these dynamics, Table 2 synthesizes the comparative findings across the three cases by aligning governance regimes, dominant narrative logics, and the spatial mechanisms through which misinformation operates. In Hebron, a militarized occupation regime produces a security-based narrative logic that legitimizes permit systems, mobility restrictions, and coordination controls; mechanisms that Yiftachel (2009) conceptualizes as forms of *militarized gray space*. In Cape Town, post-apartheid governance relies on developmental and disorder narratives that frame informal food economies and spatial distance as technical challenges rather than structural legacies of apartheid planning (Battersby & Watson, 2020). These narratives sustain what can be described as an *informal-developmental gray space*, where regulatory precarity and infrastructural inequality persist despite formal democratic reform. In Madison, a liberal settler-colonial governance regime deploys sustainability and local food narratives that emphasize procedural neutrality and symbolic recognition while leaving underlying land dispossession unaddressed (Porter, 2010; Simpson, 2014). This produces a condition of *recognition without redistribution*, where Indigenous sovereignty is acknowledged rhetorically but remains structurally peripheral. Together, the table demonstrates that although the governance regimes differ dramatically, each relies on a narrative logic that translates historically produced inequalities into administratively rational planning practices. The spatial mechanisms; whether militarized, developmental, or liberal; operate through distinct institutional tools but converge in their capacity to normalize structural asymmetry through planning.

Case	Governance Regime	Narrative Logic	Spatial Mechanism	From Gray Space
Hebron	Militarized occupation	Security	Permit regimes, mobility restrictions, coordination control	Militarized gray space
Cape Town	Post-apartheid governance	Development / disorder	Informal regulation, spatial distance, enforcement precarity	Informal-developmental gray space
Madison	Liberal settler governance	Sustainability / local food	Zoning frameworks, procedural neutrality, symbolic recognition	Recognition without redistribution

Table 2: Comparative Governance Framework. Source: Author

Chapter 8: Planning Futures Under Constrained Sovereignty

This chapter extends the thesis into broader debates on planning, sovereignty, reconstruction, and algorithmic governance. Scholars of planning and sovereignty have shown that territorial authority is not merely a legal designation but a spatial practice shaped by land regimes, jurisdictional constraints, and historical dispossession (Porter, 2010; Simpson, 2017; Daigle, 2019). Reconstruction and repair literatures emphasize that post-conflict and post-colonial planning must confront structural inequality rather than reproduce it through technical or developmental narratives (Miraftab, 2009; Sandercock, 2003; Harrison, 2017). At the same time, emerging work on AI and algorithmic governance demonstrates how computational tools increasingly shape planning knowledge, risk assessment, and decision-making (Kitchin, 2021; Benjamin, 2019; Leszczynski, 2020). Bringing these literatures together, this chapter considers how planning operates under conditions of constrained sovereignty and how narrative framing, reconstruction discourse, and algorithmic tools may shape future territorial governance.

8.1 From Comparative Diagnosis to Future Planning Conditions

The preceding chapters demonstrated that misinformation functions as a form of spatial governance. Across Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison, narrative framing translated historically produced inequalities into administratively rational planning practices. Security discourse stabilized territorial fragmentation in Hebron (Weizman, 2007; OCHA, 2024). Development-of-inevitability and disorder narratives shaped the governance of informal economies and land-use regulation in Cape Town (Battersby & Crush, 2014; Turok, 2001). Liberal neutrality and sustainability framing normalized settler land regimes in Madison (Porter, 2010; Simpson, 2014). In each case, food systems revealed the underlying structure of power by exposing conditional legitimacy, mobility control, and the epistemic boundaries within which planning debates occur (Battersby & Watson, 2020; Sbicca, 2018).

Yet all three cases share a foundational assumption: planning operates within an already constituted territorial order. That order may be fragmented, unequal, or normalized, but it remains territorially defined and institutionally established (Scott, 1998; Elden, 2013). This chapter moves beyond that assumption by examining planning under conditions where territorial sovereignty itself remains materially constrained.

This chapter therefore asks a different question: what happens when planning must operate in the formation of a state whose sovereignty may be internationally recognized yet materially limited? Rather than introducing a fourth empirical case study, the chapter functions as a theoretical horizon that extends the argument of this thesis into the future conditions of planning under constrained sovereignty. Palestine, including Gaza as part of the Palestinian territory, is used here as a conceptual anchor for examining how reconstruction, food systems, and narrative framing may shape emerging forms of statehood and territorial governance (Khalidi, 1997; Tamari, 2009; OCHA, 2023).

The goal of this chapter is not to predict political outcomes. Instead, it clarifies the structural conditions under which planning may operate when sovereignty is partially recognized but infrastructural control remains uneven (Mann, 1984; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007). In doing so, it examines how reconstruction discourse may normalize dependency (Duffield, 2007; Barakat, 2005), how food systems reveal the limits of state formation (Daigle, 2019; Huambachano, 2024), and how

algorithmic planning tools may increasingly shape the epistemic boundaries of planning knowledge and decision-making (Kitchin, 2014; Benjamin, 2019; Leszczynski, 2020).

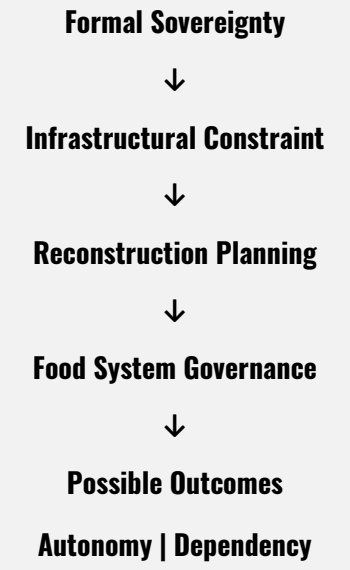


Figure 38: Planning Under Constrained Sovereignty. Source: Author.

8.2 Formal Sovereignty and Infrastructural Sovereignty

State recognition does not automatically produce territorial autonomy. Planning presumes jurisdictional authority, regulatory continuity, and infrastructural control. Yet sovereignty may exist symbolically while remaining materially constrained—a condition widely noted in scholarship on state formation and territorial governance (Mann, 1984; Elden, 2013). This distinction introduces an important analytical difference between formal sovereignty and infrastructural sovereignty.

Formal sovereignty refers to diplomatic recognition, legal statehood, and representation within international institutions (Agnew, 2005; Khalidi, 1997). Infrastructural sovereignty refers to the material capacity to control borders, water systems, energy networks, mobility corridors, land classification systems, and trade routes, capacities that underpin the everyday exercise of state power (Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007; Jessop, 2008). Planning operates primarily at this infrastructural level. Through planning institutions, roads are routed, land is classified, agricultural systems are governed, and infrastructure networks are extended across territory (Scott, 1998).

Food systems make this distinction particularly visible. The production and circulation of food require secure agricultural land, authority over water allocation, reliable energy systems, internal mobility corridors, border control over imports and exports, and regulatory authority over markets and distribution (Battersby & Watson, 2020; Daigle, 2019). If external actors retain control over any of these systems, planning operates within structural constraint. Reconstruction may rebuild physical infrastructure while leaving intact deeper forms of dependency (Barakat, 2005; Duffield, 2007).

In contexts such as Palestine, where territorial authority has historically been fragmented across multiple administrative regimes, the distinction between formal sovereignty and infrastructural sovereignty becomes central to the question of future planning capacity (Tamari, 2009; OCHA, 2023). Planning futures under constrained sovereignty must therefore be evaluated not only through diplomatic recognition but through the degree of material autonomy that planning institutions can exercise over land, infrastructure, and economic circulation (Khalidi, 1997; Weizman, 2007).

8.3 Reconstruction as a Narrative Field

Reconstruction is often presented as a technical task focused on rebuilding infrastructure and restoring essential services. In practice, reconstruction is also a narrative field through which political possibilities are framed and limited. Post-destruction planning discourse frequently mobilizes terms such as resilience, stabilization, capacity building, modernization, and humanitarian recovery, concepts that appear neutral but carry embedded political assumptions (Duffield, 2007; Barakat, 2005). While these terms seem technocratic, they prioritize particular goals and define the horizon within which planning decisions are interpreted.

If reconstruction is framed primarily through efficiency, service delivery, and donor accountability, questions of territorial autonomy may be sidelined before planning even begins. Structural political constraints may be reframed as logistical challenges. Border restrictions may be described as transitional coordination. Water-allocation asymmetries may be narrated as environmental scarcity rather than political allocation (OCHA, 2023; Weizman, 2007).

In such contexts, misinformation does not require fabrication. It operates through selective emphasis and omission. Reconstruction becomes a site where dependency is normalized through managerial language (Duffield, 2007). The risk is not simply political but epistemic: the vocabulary through which rebuilding is discussed may narrow the scope of what planning can imagine as possible (Rein & Schön, 1993; Hajer, 1995).

Planning futures are therefore shaped not only by material constraints but by the narrative frameworks through which rebuilding is conceptualized. If sovereignty is absent from reconstruction discourse, planning institutions may inadvertently stabilize the very conditions that limit territorial autonomy (Mann, 1984; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007).

8.4 Food Sovereignty as the Test of State Formation

The distinction between food security and food sovereignty becomes especially important under conditions of constrained sovereignty. Food security prioritizes access to calories, stable supply chains, and protection against hunger, whereas food sovereignty prioritizes control over land, water, ecological knowledge, and agricultural production systems (Patel, 2009; Wittman et al., 2010).

States-in-formation may achieve food security through import corridors, donor-supported supply chains, and centralized distribution programs. However, without authority over agricultural land classification, water allocation, and border trade regimes, food sovereignty remains unrealized (Daigle, 2019; Huambachano, 2024). Food systems therefore function as barriers to state viability when infrastructural control is externally regulated or fragmented (Mann, 1984; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007).

If agricultural land remains fragmented or externally regulated, sovereignty is partial. If borders remain externally controlled, trade dependency persists. If reconstruction focuses primarily on food distribution rather than agricultural autonomy, long-term self-determination remains constrained (Barakat, 2005; Duffield, 2007).

Food systems reveal whether reconstruction produces structural autonomy or reorganized dependency. Because food production integrates land governance, infrastructure networks, and ecological knowledge, it provides a particularly sensitive indicator of whether planning institutions possess the capacity to shape territorial futures (Battersby & Watson, 2020; Kimmerer, 2013).

8.5 Misinformation in Planning Futures

Earlier chapters identified three dominant narrative logics through which misinformation operates within planning systems: securitized framing, developmental inevitability, and liberal normalization. Under conditions of constrained sovereignty, a fourth narrative logic may emerge: dependency normalization through reconstruction discourse. This narrative form does not deny inequality directly. Instead, it renders structural asymmetry administratively ordinary. External border control may be reframed as technical coordination. Water-allocation ceilings may be presented as environmental scarcity. Humanitarian efficiency may be emphasized while structural political limitations are omitted (Duffield, 2007; Barakat, 2005). Planning documents may celebrate resilience while leaving intact the infrastructural conditions that limit autonomy (Hajer, 1995). Efficiency metrics may replace sovereignty metrics as the primary indicators of success. In this way, misinformation in planning futures may operate not through false claims but through the normalization of constraint (Rein & Schön, 1993).

Under reconstruction frameworks, the emerging or constrained sovereign becomes dependent. This includes the Palestinian Authority or future Palestinian state, municipal governments whose planning powers remain circumscribed by external control, and communities whose access to land, water, and mobility is mediated by actors beyond their jurisdiction (Khalidi, 1997; Tamari, 2009). Dependency emerges because of the core infrastructures required for sovereignty; borders, water systems, energy grids, trade corridors, and digital infrastructures; remain externally controlled (Mann, 1984; Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007). Reconstruction of discourse then reframes from this structural dependency as a matter of technical sequencing, capacity-building, or humanitarian necessity (Duffield, 2007). In this way, the dependent is produced through the very condition of reconstruction claims to remedy.

As planning increasingly relies on data analytics, modeling systems, and automated decision tools, these narrative structures may become embedded within technical infrastructures themselves. When constraint is treated as an unquestioned parameter within planning models, dependency becomes administratively stabilized. Misinformation evolves beyond discursive omission and becomes encoded within optimization architectures that normalize structural asymmetry (Kitchin, 2014; Benjamin, 2019; Leszczynski, 2020).

8.6 Algorithmic Framing and AI as Epistemic Infrastructure

Artificial intelligence systems are increasingly integrated into planning governance, including reconstruction modeling, infrastructure prioritization, food-supply optimization, risk assessment, and policy drafting. These systems are frequently presented as neutral tools designed to enhance efficiency and support data-driven decision-making. Yet algorithmic systems do not operate outside of narrative structure. They are trained on historical datasets, institutional documents, and policy

frameworks that reflect existing governance priorities (Kitchin, 2014; O'Neil, 2016). In this sense, AI becomes an epistemic infrastructure: it shapes what is visible, measurable, and administratively actionable within planning systems (Benjamin, 2019; Leszczynski, 2020).

Under conditions of constrained sovereignty, this distinction becomes critical. If reconstruction frameworks are built around stabilization metrics, donor-compliance indicators, and efficiency benchmarks, algorithmic systems trained within those frameworks will inherit those priorities (Duffield, 2007). Political constraints may be encoded as fixed parameters. Border restrictions may be optimized rather than questioned. Water-allocation ceilings may be treated as environmental variables rather than sovereignty issues (Weizman, 2007; OCHA, 2023). What appears as computational objectivity may simply be the reproduction of structural asymmetry through parameterization (Kitchin, 2021).

Algorithmic systems also raise questions about epistemic inclusion. Planning models often rely on governmental and international datasets that may exclude Indigenous ecological knowledge, local farming practices, and community-based land-management traditions (Kimmerer, 2013; Huambachano, 2024). When such knowledge remains absent from training data, algorithmic systems reproduce a narrow field of planning knowledge. In contexts such as future reconstruction planning in Palestine, including Gaza, these concerns become particularly significant (Khalidi, 1997; Tamari, 2009). If planning models are developed primarily through external datasets and optimization frameworks, local knowledge systems risk being marginalized within the reconstruction process itself. Under these conditions, sovereignty extends beyond territory and infrastructure to include control over the data, models, and narratives through which reconstruction is imagined (Jessop, 2008; Mann, 1984).

8.7 Toward Decolonial and Misinformation-Resistant Planning

Planning futures under constrained sovereignty requires a shift toward what may be described as decolonial and misinformation-resistant planning frameworks. Such frameworks would explicitly incorporate sovereignty, structural asymmetry, and epistemic inclusion into planning evaluation criteria (Porter, 2010; Miraftab, 2009). Planning must ask fundamental questions about power and governance: who controls land-classification systems, who allocates water rights, who determines border flows, whose ecological knowledge shapes agricultural design, and what metrics define successful reconstruction (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014).

Decolonial planning requires integrating sovereignty into infrastructural design rather than treating it as symbolic recognition (Alfred, 2005; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Misinformation-resistant planning requires institutional safeguards that prevent epistemic narrowing within reconstruction discourse. These safeguards may include embedding structural-asymmetry analysis within planning frameworks, incorporating sovereignty indicators into evaluation metrics, ensuring that local and Indigenous knowledge systems inform agricultural and land-use planning, distinguishing emergency stabilization from long-term autonomy-building, and maintaining transparency and local oversight over algorithmic planning tools (Kimmerer, 2013; Huambachano, 2024).

This shift also requires rethinking administrative rationality itself. Vertical, state-centric planning models assume that authority flows downward through bureaucratic systems. Yet comparative planning scholarship demonstrates that alternative models exist. Indigenous land-based governance in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Canada, participatory budgeting

in Brazil, community-driven reconstruction in Aceh and Kerala, and insurgent planning practices across the Global South illustrate how planning can be organized horizontally, relationally, and collectively (Holston, 2008; Miraftab, 2009). These models do not treat community engagement as consultation; they treat it as governance. They demonstrate that planning authority can be distributed rather than centralized, relational rather than procedural, and grounded in land-based knowledge rather than administrative neutrality (Whyte, 2018; Daigle, 2019).

In non-Western contexts, community engagement cannot be imported as a procedural tool. It must be grounded in local governance traditions, agricultural cooperatives, neighborhood committees, women's associations, and Indigenous stewardship practices (Corntassel, 2008; Kimmerer, 2013). Horizontal planning is therefore not a technique but a political orientation: one that redistributes authority, recognizes sovereignty, and resists the administrative rationality that normalizes constraint.

Planning cannot remain administratively neutral when sovereignty is materially constrained. Under such conditions, neutrality itself becomes a political stance (Jessop, 2008; Mann, 1984).

8.8 Infrastructural Power and the Architecture of State Formation

Political theorists distinguish between symbolic sovereignty and infrastructural power: the capacity of a state to penetrate territory and implement decisions through material systems such as roads, taxation networks, water-management systems, and food-distribution infrastructure (Mann, 1984; Elden, 2013). Planning operates precisely at this infrastructural level, where authority is exercised through land classification, mobility regulation, and the extension of networks that make territorial governance possible (Scott, 1998).

Under constrained sovereignty, an emerging state may possess diplomatic recognition while lacking infrastructural control. Borders may remain externally monitored. Water resources may remain unevenly allocated. Trade corridors may depend on neighboring authorities. In such contexts, planning risks becoming managerial without being sovereign; capable of administering programs but unable to shape the territorial conditions that determine their viability (Mundy & Saumarez Smith, 2007; Agnew, 2005).

Food systems illustrate this distinction clearly. They require territorial continuity, control over agricultural land, reliable water allocation, energy infrastructure, and autonomous trade decision-making (Battersby & Watson, 2020; Daigle, 2019). If any of these remain externally mediated, the food system becomes structurally dependent even if formally nationalized. Food systems therefore reveal the limits of sovereignty when infrastructural power is fragmented or externally regulated (Huambachano, 2024).

Thus, the question of reconstruction cannot be separated from the question of infrastructural power. Planning decisions shape the material architecture through which sovereignty becomes operational, determining whether reconstruction produces territorial autonomy or reorganized dependency (Barakat, 2005; Duffield, 2007).

8.9 Conclusion: Planning Beyond Administrative Rationality

This thesis has examined how misinformation operates as a form of spatial governance across three distinct contexts; Hebron, Cape Town, and Madison; and how narrative framing translates historically produced inequalities into administratively rational planning outcomes. Through a comparative analysis of food systems, regulatory mechanisms, and territorial governance, thesis has shown that misinformation is not merely a distortion of fact. It is a governance strategy: a narrative architecture that stabilizes unequal spatial arrangements by rendering them administratively ordinary.

Across the three cases, planning institutions did not simply regulate land, mobility, or infrastructure. They shaped the interpretive frameworks through which these spatial arrangements were understood. Security discourse in Hebron, developmental inevitability in Cape Town, and liberal neutrality in Madison each transformed structural asymmetries into technical planning problems. These narrative logics allowed unequal territorial orders to appear rational, necessary, or natural. In doing so, they revealed that planning is not only a material practice but also an epistemic one; one that governs through interpretation as much as through regulation.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that misinformation functions through three mechanisms:

1. Narrative framing, which defines what forms of inequality are visible or invisible.
2. Regulatory conditionality, which determines who may access land, mobility, or markets.
3. Institutional normalization, which stabilizes unequal arrangements through administrative routines.

Food systems provide a particularly powerful lens for identifying these mechanisms. Because food production and distribution depend directly on land tenure, water access, mobility systems, and regulatory authority, they expose the material foundations of sovereignty. In each case, food systems revealed how planning institutions mediate legitimacy, mobility, and territorial authority through narrative and administrative tools.

The thesis then extended this analysis into the future conditions of planning under constrained sovereignty, using Palestine; including Gaza; as a conceptual horizon. Here, the stakes of misinformation become even more pronounced. When sovereignty exists formally but remains materially limited through fragmented infrastructure, restricted mobility, or externally mediated resource control, planning risks become the managerial language through which structural limitation is stabilized rather than transformed. Reconstruction of discourse may normalize dependency by framing structural asymmetry as technical coordination, humanitarian necessity, or environmental constraint. Under such conditions, planning can inadvertently reproduce the very limitations it seeks to overcome.

The emergence of algorithmic governance intensifies these dynamics. As planning increasingly relies on predictive modeling, optimization systems, and data-driven decision tools, the epistemic infrastructures of planning become sites where narrative framing is encoded. Algorithmic systems do not operate outside institutional narratives; they inherit the priorities embedded within the data and policy frameworks that train them. When structural constraints are treated as fixed parameters rather than contested political arrangements, algorithmic planning risks transforming inequality into computational normality. The future of planning therefore depends not only on material reconstruction but also on epistemic sovereignty: control over the data, models, and narratives through which planning knowledge is produced.

The thesis also argues that alternatives to administrative rationality exist. Comparative planning scholarship, Indigenous land-based governance, participatory budgeting, community-driven reconstruction, and insurgent planning practices demonstrate that planning can be organized horizontally rather than vertically. These models redistribute authority, foreground relational accountability, and integrate local and Indigenous knowledge systems into planning processes. They show that planning need not rely on procedural neutrality or technocratic expertise to achieve legitimacy. Instead, planning can be grounded in sovereignty, reciprocity, and collective governance.

Taking together, the findings of this thesis contribute to planning scholarships in three ways.

First, the thesis conceptualizes misinformation as a structural feature of planning systems rather than an aberration. It demonstrates that narrative framing is central to how planning interprets, stabilizes, and legitimizes spatial inequality.

Second, the thesis advances a framework for understanding planning under constrained sovereignty. It shows that sovereignty is not only a legal designation, but an infrastructural and epistemic condition shaped by land governance, mobility systems, and data infrastructures.

Third, the thesis identifies food systems as diagnostic infrastructures that reveal the material and narrative foundations of territorial governance. Food systems expose the limits of autonomy and the mechanisms through which dependency is produced, normalized, or contested.

The implications of this work extend beyond the three cases examined. As planning confronts global challenges; from climate reconstruction to displacement, digital governance, and post-conflict rebuilding; the question is not only how to design infrastructure but how to design interpretive frameworks that do not reproduce structural asymmetry. Planning must move beyond administrative rationality toward decolonial and misinformation-resistant frameworks that foreground sovereignty, structural analysis, and epistemic inclusion.

The central question that emerges from this thesis remains open: **will planning cultivate territorial autonomy, or will it stabilize constrained sovereignty through administrative rationality?** This thesis does not resolve that question. Instead, it clarifies its stakes. It demonstrates that the future of planning depends on whether institutions can recognize the narrative architectures through which inequality is normalized; and whether they can imagine forms of governance that refuse to treat structural constraint as an administrative fact.

In this sense, the thesis offers both a critique and an invitation. It critiques the ways planning has historically reproduced inequality through narrative and administrative tools. And it invites planners, scholars, and communities to imagine planning futures grounded not in the normalization of constraint but in the material and epistemic conditions necessary for sovereignty, justice, and autonomy.

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