In 2005 Israel evacuated the Gaza settlements and destroyed 3,000 homes, creating a million and a half tons of toxic rubble.
Our project begins where the previous failed.
Decolonizing Architecture, deals with a fundamental question: how Israeli colonies and military bases – the architecture of Israel’s colonization – could be reused, recycled or re-inhabited by Palestinians, at the moment it is unplugged from the military/political power that charges it.
We are revisiting the term of *decolonization* in order to maintain a distance from the current political terms of a “solution” to the Palestinian conflict and its respective borders.
We suggest the decolonization as an act of *profanation*, which speculates on the use of colonial architecture for purposes other than those they were designed to perform.
“To profane,” Giorgio Agamben writes “does not simply mean to abolish or cancel separations, but to learn to make new uses of them…
…through the disactivating and making inoperative an old use.”
Two project sites were chosen as two prototypes of decolonization: the colony of Psagot (still inhabited by colonists) and the former Israeli military base of Oush Grab, which was evacuated in 2006.
The guiding principle is thus not to eliminate the power of the occupation’s built spaces, nor simply to reuse it in the way it was designed for, but rather to reorient its logic to other aims.

We believe that if the geography of occupation is to be liberated, its potential must be turned against itself.
To profane the colonial order of space it is not enough to allow the transformation of control from one political system to another, (allow a change from an Israeli colony to a Palestinian gated community), but rather to neutralize its divisions and hierarchies and return it to common use.
UNGROUNDING
The surface of the suburb is marked by its various uses. It is inscribed extensively with the signs of the petty bourgeois lifestyle that maintains it: an excess of roads and parking lots, private gardens, fences, sidewalks and tropical plants. The first ten centimetres of the urban ground surface embody most of its operational logic and also its ideology.
This surface is the primary site of our intervention. It is the logic of the surface that we seek to *desactivate* in order to dismantle the structures that define the internal organization of the suburb. Under the category of ‘ungrounding’ the manual suggests a radical transformation of the first 15cm of the ground.
Ungrounding is achieved through the dismantling of the existent surface – roads, sidewalks, private gardens. Methods of ground transformation are based on accelerating the decay of existing surface elements.
The pervasive system of roads will be eroded, removed or buried under new surface layers.
The barriers and fences that demarcate the edges of the private lots of the single-family homes will be removed as the ground will be open for new uses'.
The reorganization of the surface configures a new *figure-ground* relation.
Paraphrasing Agamben we could say that a space without separations is not a space that abolished and lost all memory of difference of class or nationality, but is a space that has learned to desactivate its control devices so as to render new collective usage possible.
In our meeting with associations and individuals, we realize that a crucial aspect in a process of decolonization is concerned with land ownership.
In our research we came across a map dated 1954 which shows land ownership on the site of Psagot. We superimposed the plan of these divisions onto the plan of the colony. The result is a superimposition of two land systems. One cutting into the other.
DE-PARCELING

In the course of our analysis, we made use of both documentary and narrative sources to identify some of the boundaries within the settlement process. The boundaries have been established through the geographical context of various sets of governance, especially of local communities and institutions, in order to identify connections. Our investigation traced some of the boundaries of Palestinian landowners in the UK, Australia, and the United States. We found that boundaries often change and are not static. The boundaries are not fixed and are subject to the impact of economic and political factors. The boundaries of the settlement are not fixed and are subject to change. The boundaries are not fixed and are subject to the impact of economic and political factors. The boundaries of the settlement are not fixed and are subject to change.

Topographic variations
The land that lies on the east side of the Jordan Valley is divided into two categories: public and private. The public land is owned by the government and is used for agricultural purposes. The private land is owned by individuals and is used for housing and other purposes. The boundaries between the two categories are not always clear and are subject to change.

Boundaries and ownership
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Responding to change
The boundaries between public and private land are not always clear and are subject to change. The boundaries are not fixed and are subject to the impact of economic and political factors. The boundaries of the settlement are not fixed and are subject to change.

Parcelling
Parcelling refers to the process of dividing land into smaller parcels. This process is often used to increase the value of land by breaking up large parcels into smaller, more manageable parcels. The boundaries of the settlement are not fixed and are subject to change. The boundaries are not fixed and are subject to the impact of economic and political factors. The boundaries of the settlement are not fixed and are subject to change.
The land division lines cut through the fabric of the settlement
A process of deparcelization creates a new zoning which restructures the colonial order, establishing new relationship between the houses and their parcels.
With the process *deparcelization* we propose neither to simply abolish nor to re-establish the original lines of separation, but to allow one to *disactivate* the other.
Each lots, having the status of either private or public property becomes an independent planning unit, pure means.
UNHOMING
We spatialize a set of different functions into the repetitive domestic shells of evacuated settlement homes.
Cutout Public Plot no. 2
Best results

Within the settlements, uniformity of architectural form is often replaced through the repetition of a small variety of forms, and often, elements of environment. With all these types, the pitched roof becomes the dominant element, the only feature of a house, such as

In an interview with the World Bank's social and economic development chief about the impact of the recent crisis on the country's economy, he said:

"The impact of the crisis on the economy is significant and far-reaching. It's a moment of uncertainty and adjustment. We must be prepared to face the challenges head-on."

The crisis has led to a significant slowdown in economic activity, with many businesses reporting a decline in sales and profits. This has had a ripple effect throughout the country, affecting various sectors and industries.

Despite the challenges, there are some positive aspects. The crisis has highlighted the importance of resilience and adaptation. Many businesses have found innovative ways to survive and even thrive in these difficult times.

The government has implemented a range of measures to support businesses and individuals, including tax relief, financial assistance, and other forms of support. These measures have helped to mitigate some of the impacts of the crisis and provide a sense of stability and hope.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on rebuilding and sustaining economic growth. This will require a continued commitment to innovation, collaboration, and adaptation. By working together, we can overcome the challenges and emerge stronger as a society.
In May of 2006, the Israeli army evacuated a military camp strategically located on the highest hill at the southern entrance to the Palestinian city of Beit Sahour, in the Bethlehem region.
The military base of Oush Grab (the crow’s nest) was built by the British Army in the 1930s to control ‘disorder’ in the area of Bethlehem.
The base was used by the Jordan Legion (1948-67) and the Israeli army (1967-2006) for the very same purpose.
Throughout the second intifada the Israeli army used the base as a headquarter for incursions into Bethlehem and other towns and villages.

195 homes were damaged by gunfire from the camp.
In April 2006 the Israeli army abandoned the base for tactical reasons.
And the Palestinians gained access to it…
15.10.07: Palestinians and International inaugurated a park in Oush Grab
using abandoned military infrastructure
15.05.08: Nakba Day, settlers arrive at the hilltop for the first time
18.05.08: Activists confront the settlers on site
A few days later activists starts inhabiting the site
30.05.08: Settlers return to the hilltop
The Israeli army prohibits Palestinians and Internationals from entering the former base.
a revolving door occupancy between activists and settlers begins
The ‘battle for the hilltop’ is exemplified by competing grafitti
WELCOME TO SHDEMA

THE LAND OF ISRAEL BELONGS TO THE JEWS!
and architectural transformations
26.07.08: Louisa Morgantini, Vice-President of the European Parliament, visits Oush Grab and our office
A proposal was developed together with local NGO’s – the Palestine Wildlife Society, Women Shelter, Save the Children, Alternative Tourism Group, Alternative Information Centre – but also with local authorities, the university of Birzeit, and with residents.
As the earth rampart around the buildings is gradually transformed, the buildings seem to inhabit the mouth of a volcano.
Every spring and autumn thousands of migrating birds stop by the hilltop on their way to Europe/Africa.
Decolonizing Architecture a project by
London/Bethlehem Architectural Studio directed by
Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti, Eyal Weizman.
The project was originally conceptualized and its pilot stage produced in dialogue with Eloisa Haudenschild & Steve Fagin partners in Spare Parts, a division of the haudenschildGarage
Psagot re-design
Barbara Modolo, Pietro Onofri, Armina Pilav, Rana Shaka, Manuel Singer, Alessandro Zorzetto

Oush Grab re-design
Mario Abruzzese, Jiries Boullata, Sara Pellegrini, Francesca Vargiu
Manual of decolonization
conception and design overview: Salottobuono

Landscape design and models
Situ Studio, NYC
Video Editing
Roberto Sartor, Allegra Martin

Web design
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www.decolonizing.ps