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FEAR, AGRICULTURE, AND MOVEMENT DISRUPTIONS: STRAY DOGS IN NUBA: ENVIRONMENTAL SLOW VIOLENCE

Amro Shrouf¹, Saad Ameerah^{1*}

Supervisor: Dr. Saad Ameerah¹

¹ Urban Studies and Spatial Practices Department, Al-Quds Bard College, Al-Quds University, Abu Dis, Palestine

Abstract

Background: This research positions stray dogs in Nuba not merely as environmental or public health concerns, but as active agents shaping everyday life, spatial practices, and sensory experiences in rural Palestine. Nuba, a frontier Palestinian village located 11 km northwest of Hebron at 550 meters above sea level, has historically been a hub of agricultural production. Before the Nakba of 1948, nearly 47% of its 22,836 dunums were arable, underscoring its role as a farming and production center (Palestine Remembered, 2025; Felaha Reports). The current population of 4,336 (2007) experiences the persistent presence of stray dogs as a high-risk phenomenon influencing daily routines, public space usage, and perceptions of safety.

Objectives: This study aims to examine stray dogs as nonhuman agents influencing rural life in Nuba, to analyze their impact on spatial practices and perceptions of risk, and to situate these interactions within broader political, environmental, and institutional contexts.

Methods: Using an ethnographic approach, the study combines participant observation, sensory mapping, and semi-structured interviews conducted in December 2025 with eight residents of diverse ages, genders, and occupations, including retired teachers, shopkeepers, housewives, and university graduates. Mapping exercises identified dog congregation zones, roaming areas, and intrusion into gardens and streets, highlighting the spatial dimensions of nonhuman agency.

Results: Field notes and interviews documented recurring patterns of fear, avoidance, and adaptation, including canceled social events, restricted mobility, and psychological stress, particularly among children. Residents reported direct encounters such as dog bites and distress caused by persistent barking, as well as concerns about disease transmission and environmental hygiene. The findings demonstrate how stray dogs reshape spatial behavior and social interactions within the village.

Conclusion: The study situates human–nonhuman interactions within broader political and institutional contexts, including municipal governance, public health interventions, and settler-colonial dynamics. While local strategies such as treatment of sick dogs, waste management regulations, and awareness campaigns



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exist, structural constraints—such as limited municipal resources and historical displacement—sustain vulnerability. By foregrounding the agency of stray dogs alongside local coping mechanisms, this research contributes to multispecies ethnography and critical rural studies, offering a nuanced understanding of risk, coexistence, and everyday life in politically constrained environments.

Keywords: Rural insecurity, stray dogs, spatial daily life, political ecology, land disruptions.