



# Around Europe

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## The Economic Crisis in Europe

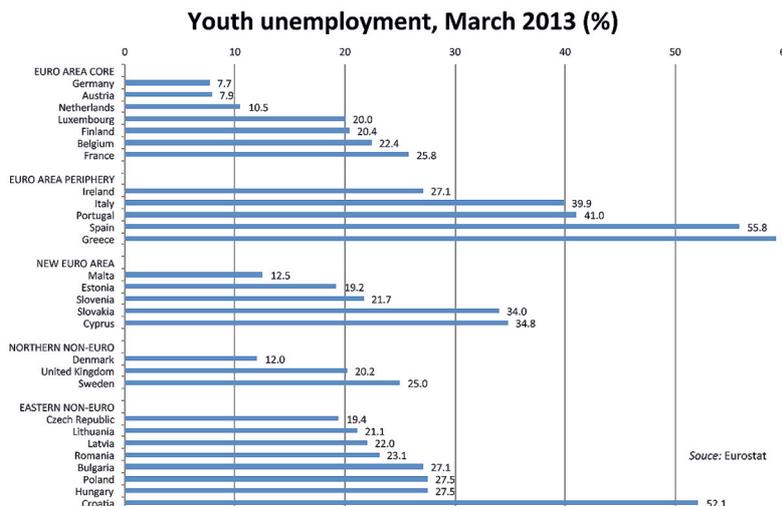
For nearly 30 years after the Second World War, the Western capitalist economies were characterised by low unemployment and a steady rise in living standards for the broad mass of the population. This came to an end in the mid-1970s and, following a period of recession and restructuring, a new phase of capitalism emerged in the 1980s. This has been characterised by higher unemployment and a much slower rise in living standards for most people, although top incomes increased very strongly. One of the important features of this new phase is that there has been a marked expansion of banks, of financial markets and of highly complex financial instruments.

This began in the US and Britain in the 1980s, and followed in the 1990s in Germany, France and other European countries. As a result, big European banks expanded their activities in the US, and this left them highly vulnerable to the major crisis which erupted in the US in 2007.

In the US, real incomes (after allowing for inflation) for some 80 per cent of the population have scarcely increased

since the 1980s. Economic growth in the US became dependent on working- and middle-class households financing increased consumption by borrowing more and more. In the early 2000s there was a boom in house mortgages, including so-called 'sub-prime' mortgages for working-class, black, and female-headed households who did not qualify for a traditional mortgage. As house prices increased, many households borrowed against the rising value of their homes to finance additional consumption. This was, of course, unsustainable. Following the collapse of various highly complex financial securities, a major financial crisis broke in the US in August 2007 and deepened dramatically in September 2008. This led to a collapse of bank lending, and the sharpest fall in economic output since the 1930s.

The crisis in the US was transmitted to Europe through two main channels. Firstly, as big European banks made large losses in the US, they cut back their lending in Europe, and even large, well-known companies found it difficult to obtain finance. Secondly, as a result of the downturn in the US, there was a large decline in demand for products from other countries, and exports by European countries fell by some 30 per cent. The result was a big decline in output in Europe between October 2008 and March 2009. These developments had a very negative impact on government budgets: as big banks were faced with failure in October 2008, the government stepped in to rescue them; in response to the sharp decline in output - and consequently jobs - governments across Europe increased their spending in an attempt to counter the downturn; and as incomes and profits fell, government tax receipts also declined. Increased spending and falling tax revenues led to a big increase in government deficits throughout Europe, but this was a result, not a cause, of the crisis.



Youth Unemployment levels in EU Member States as of March 2013. Graph from Trevor Evans. See Trevor's full presentation at QCEA.org.

While the crisis originated in the US and also had a serious impact in Britain, it had an even more serious outcome in the euro area as several countries were faced with debt crises. This was primarily due to the construction of the euro area, which involved a

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common monetary policy with a single central bank interest rate, but where each government continued to be responsible for its level of spending and taxation, and there was no coordination of wage policy. Between the introduction of the euro in 1999 and the outbreak of the crisis in 2007, large imbalances developed between the countries in the euro area. In Germany, economic growth was low, there was no rise in real wages, and the economy depended on expanding its exports to other euro-area states. In Southern Europe, growth was strong and countries sucked in exports from Germany and other Northern countries, leading to a trade deficit that was financed by borrowing from banks in Germany and France. This unsustainable situation first broke in Greece in May 2010, detonated by speculation against Greek government bonds, but it spread rapidly to Portugal and Ireland and subsequently to Spain, Italy, and, finally, Slovenia.



Photo Credit, Jim D Woodward. CC

The European Central Bank (ECB), Frankfurt, Germany.

The official response of the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund ('the troika') was to provide support for countries facing difficulties, but with very strict conditions. These focussed above all on imposing fiscal discipline and required significant cuts in public spending. The result of these austerity policies was to drive the countries into deep recessions, which then also affected the countries of Northern Europe, as their key export markets contracted. The impact of these policies has been highly regressive. Unemployment has risen to over 20 percent, and youth unemployment to over 50 per cent, in Greece and Spain, the worst hit countries, and there has been a decline in real incomes of up to 20 percent. In addition, however, the deep recessions in Southern Europe led to a decline in tax revenues which made it even more difficult for governments to service their debt payments, and investors started to speculate that governments would default on their loans. As banks in these countries held government bonds, a vicious spiral developed: a decline in the value of government bonds increased the danger of a banking failure which would require further government support.

With the survival of the euro in question, this precarious situation was only broken when the head of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, announced in mid-2012 that the ECB would intervene on whatever scale necessary to stabilise government bond markets - something the central banks of the US and Britain had in effect done from the outset. This established a fragile financial stability in the euro area, although bank lending to firms continued to decline in 2013. While the recession is expected to end in 2014, output in most Southern and Eastern EU Member States is well below that in 2007, and the outlook is for slow growth at best, with no appreciable decline in unemployment in the near future.

The EuroMemo Group is a network of European economists which has argued for a different approach (see [www.euromemo.eu](http://www.euromemo.eu)). According to the Group's proposals, the financial sector should be dramatically downsized and subject to tight control so that finance supports socially desirable and sustainable investment. Budgetary policy should be refocused from austerity to promoting employment in what the International Labour Organisation calls 'decent work', with an end to attacks on social spending and a shift to a more progressive tax policy. The common European monetary policy should be complemented with a European fiscal policy designed to combat economic downturns and to counter the polarising effect of the common currency. Payments imbalances between euro area countries should be reduced by requiring adjustment not only by deficit countries, as at present, but also by surplus countries, like Germany. The most indebted countries will never be able to repay their debts, which currently act as a major burden on economic recovery, and they should be subject to an audit to determine which of the debts are legitimate. Wages should rise at least in line with labour productivity, and urgent steps must be taken to reverse the growth of low-paid and precarious jobs - a problem even in countries like Germany. Finally, a European investment strategy should be initiated at local, national, and regional levels to promote a major social and ecological transformation which provides a sustainable economic future that will benefit all the citizens of Europe.

**Trevor Evans**

Trevor Evans is professor of economics at the Berlin School of Economics and Law, and a member of the coordinating committee of the EuroMemo group (European Economists for an Alternative Economic Policy in Europe). This summary comes from his keynote at the QCEA/QPSW conference on Europe and Economic Justice, 'The origins of the economic crisis in Europe and progressive policy alternatives'.



## Introducing QCEA's new Deputy Representative

QCEA is pleased to welcome Andrew Lane as its first Deputy Representative. He will be focusing on QCEA's programme areas of criminal justice and peace.

Andrew comes to Brussels from Bedford, which is within Luton and Leighton Area Meeting in Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Until the end of 2013 Andrew was the policy advisor to a regional police commissioner in one of the most ethnically diverse parts of the UK. Over the past seven years he has championed diversity and inclusion within the police service, and he has worked to reduce violence in his community. Andrew is a member of Quakers in Criminal Justice and will be speaking at their conference in February.



Photo Credit: Alexandra Bosbeer

Andrew grew up near Oxford, England, in a family of five. He first became active in politics when he was 15, taking part in petrol station protests as part of the 'Stop Esso' Climate Change campaign. Andrew has degrees in International Politics from Aberystwyth and Peacekeeping from Birmingham, and he has also studied Transnational Organised Crime at Staffordshire University and at the University of Novi Sad in Serbia.

## QCEA has a new Office Manager

Gordon Matthews, who has served Quakers in Europe at QCEA as a Programme Assistant and as a Joint Representative, has come back to Brussels to act as Office Manager and Friendly Office Presence. He is the person to contact if you would like to hire a room at Quaker House or to send a donation in Euro.

Gordon has recently returned to Europe after two months in Palestine and Israel, where he blogged about his experiences at <http://letthesilencing.wordpress.com>. Before that, he was Resident Friend at Claridge House.

## Join the QCEA Study Tour 5th - 12th April 2014

Registration is now open for the QCEA study tour 5 - 12 April 2014. Join us for a special week! "The Study Tour is a remarkable opportunity to see and access the institutions and buildings in Brussels and Strasbourg", said one recent participant.

You are invited to come to Brussels and Strasbourg in April 2014 to learn, discuss, and reflect on what Europe, the European Union, and the Council of Europe mean to you. We will visit various European institutions in Brussels and even get to watch a debate in the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly in Strasbourg. Other plans for the programme include meetings with officials of the Council and Commission of the European Union, MEPs, and NGOs. A 2011 participant noted, "It helped us understand something of the way the EU works and how it is changing, and also that the EU Institutions are open to the public, and willing to listen to it and groups that represent it."

Registration is now open for the 2014 QCEA Study Tour. People who are over 18 and who can handle a fair amount of walking are welcome to join. (Half the places in this pre-registration are reserved for young adults.) The price will depend on whether you prefer to stay in hostel dorms or in hotels. Last date for registration is 24 February 2014, but do let us know if you are interested as soon as possible so we can be sure to keep a place for you.

For more information, see <http://www.qcea.org/home/events/study-tours/> or contact [studytour@qcea.org](mailto:studytour@qcea.org)



## "What 'Gifts' can you Bring?"

On Sunday 17 November, the day before I spoke at QCEA's conference, I travelled to Warsaw to take part in the 19th Conference of Parties to the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change - or, in UN jargon, COP19 of the UNFCCC. This was due to be my third COP. It would not be a decisive COP, but a stepping stone towards an international agreement in two years' time. It was set to be a very difficult COP: Poland is a country in which 90 percent of electricity is produced through coal-burning power stations, the costs of transforming the energy sector are considerable, and people are increasingly concerned about energy poverty and the cost of living as wages do not keep pace with prices. It has always been my view that if we are to guarantee a just transition towards a more sustainable economy, then it is in places like Katowice in Poland or my home town of Middlesbrough, England, with their employment dependence on large chemical and heavy industrial bases, that a just transition must deliver sustainable jobs, a fairer economy, and hope for people. It was this vision, and how we get there, that I reflected on at the QCEA conference.

Our scientific understanding of climate change has taken leaps forward - last month the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change were published showing that we are likely heading towards a 3-4°C rise in average global temperatures by 2100, something unseen for millions of years. However, our capacity internationally to address the clear threats our species faces within this century, are stalling. This is largely as a result of the economic crisis, a resurgent 'business as usual' model, and powerful vested interests.

Europe is in crisis on many fronts, and each one presents us with fundamental challenges to creating a sustainable future. Twenty-six million people are out of work across the EU, as workers are paying for the banking crisis with deep cuts to jobs, wages, and our public services. Over half of the young people in countries like Spain and Greece are unemployed. In turn, economic insecurity is widening the gap between rich and poor, making for a more unequal, more divided Europe. Political populism is increasing, and the scapegoating of migrants and minorities is fast on the rise. In addition, economic uncertainties are playing their part in making people less concerned about the environment and climate change, at a time when we know we are pushing the planet to its limit in consuming energy and natural resources at a totally unsustainable rate.

While climate negotiations are stalling, trade negotiations are pressing quickly ahead. One is the TTIP, as it is known, between the EU and US, which collectively account for 50 percent of world output. This week saw the second round of negotiations, and

also the apparent conclusion of negotiations with Canada for a free trade agreement. Meanwhile, within the 'Very Good Friends of Services' group in the WTO (made up of OECD countries plus some pro-trade allies), a new, more radical global agreement on services is being discussed, pressing ever further for liberalisation and privatisation of services. Together these amount to a substantial increase in the power of multinational companies over our economies, democratic systems, and natural resources.

Since 2010, we have seen a reversal of Europe's green policies: what we see is that "black austerity" where incentives and subsidies into the green economy are cut in the name of fiscal consolidation, and 'affordable energy' has taken on a false priority in the name of 'competitiveness' and become the dominant political debate across Europe. This is short-termism in the extreme: economically, environmentally, and socially.

Two contradictory ideas currently shape our mainstream political debate. First, the argument for austerity says that states cannot and should not live beyond their financial means. Second, there is the notion that we can and must, in effect, live beyond our environmental means. This internal contradiction has enormous and long-term implications for our social cohesion within and between countries.



Photo credit Habeebee, CC.

The Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia protest against austerity measures imposed by a number of European Governments

A sustainable economy and future for our species is only possible if we address this short-termism in our economies and financial markets, notably by addressing the way that environmental and social criteria are considered in financial and investment risk calculations and, more fundamentally, by recognising that sustainable economies cannot be based on continuous value extraction and shareholder value models.

All is not lost. There are alternatives to recession and austerity, to environmental degradation and social crisis - but we need to address the underlying flaws in our economic system that are creating rising inequality and undermining sustainability.



In the 1940s, after the devastation of the Second World War, the US government took a brave and important decision - the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known informally as the G.I. Bill: a law that provided a range of benefits for returning veterans, including low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start businesses, and, importantly, cash payments of tuition and living expenses to attend college, high school, or vocational education. The long-term economic effects of that decision could be felt decades later. It is this imagination that we need today. Since 2009, together with MEPs, youth activists and others, we have been calling for a European Youth Guarantee: the right to a decent job, proper training, or a quality apprenticeship within 4 months of unemployment for anyone under 25. Why not a Green 'GI' Bill for today's young unemployed to drive the new goods, services, and investment needed in the next 50 years?

Time and again we see where there is political will, there is a way. In February this year, €6 billion were allocated to implementing a European Youth Guarantee. It's not enough: Eurofound's latest comparative research findings on the young not in employment, education or training (NEETs) show that the economic loss to society of not integrating NEETs is estimated at €153 billion. But it does show the power of alliances and alternatives. This holds at all levels, and I think the contribution of Quakers collectively must be to help build this political will.

As a trade union leader responsible for worker engagement in climate action and sustainable development, I often find myself remembering Rufus Jones' words before the 1937 Second World Conference of Friends, "I have become a good deal disillusioned over 'big' conferences and large gatherings. I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place".



A protest in Dublin against the debt incurred by the Irish state between 2008 and 2013. Photo Credit William CC.

Despite my deep frustration about the current situation and the pace of transition, strength comes from the practical action I see at the local level in

Europe and internationally. I take strength from cooperation within the trade union movement, which, together with NGOs and companies working on environmental protection and social justice, aims at changing the narrative.

There are many places to start, such as actions focused on changing the way we produce and consume goods and services, conserve resources, work smarter, and avoid destroying vital eco-systems provided by our seas and forests. Efforts to find alternatives to fossil fuels - oil, gas, coal - and to channel investment into new technologies and the jobs and skills that go with them - solar and wind power, electric vehicles and trains, capturing and storing carbon emissions, and saving energy at home and at work. Remember Advices and Queries 27 "Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community?" What gifts can you bring to changing the narrative? What can we as Quakers do to build this alternative?

'Thinking globally, acting locally', said the Meeting House poster when I was a young Quaker in Middlesbrough. In Warsaw, some of my colleagues will be presenting what they are doing practically in their 'small circles' to address the challenges of climate change and economic short-termism: roundtable discussions to find sustainable solutions, awareness raising and training, sustainable investment strategies and pension portfolios, community based retrofitting initiatives, and more. What as Quakers can we do in our 'small circles'?

In Warsaw, I was set to speak in the UNFCCC on the need to use the opportunities created through tackling climate change to create large numbers of jobs for our young people. We face many challenges, but the loss of a whole generation of young people in Europe - economically and socially - will fundamentally undermine our capacity to build a sustainable economy in the long term. In the short term, the scale of the social crisis felt by many is creating a breeding ground for nationalistic and xenophobic arguments.

Our peace and social justice testimonies compel us, I think, to act however we can, at whatever level or scale, to use our 'gifts' to change the narrative and ensure the right sharing of the world's resources.

**Judith Kirton-Darling**

Judith Kirton-Darling is Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation and a member of Brussels Quaker Meeting. This article is a summary of her keynote speech "Action is what is needed not more words: one Friend's view on how to effect change for a more sustainable society" given at the QCEA/QPSW. conference in November 2013.



## Then and Now: Youth Unemployment

As this edition of *Around Europe* and the recent QCEA/QPSW conference illustrate, economic justice is currently an important issue in Europe. Since the end of the Second World War, European citizens have experienced unprecedented levels of prosperity, and it is no coincidence that at the same time they have also enjoyed unparalleled levels of peace. The European Union (EU) has played an important role in this. However, today Europe faces major economic problems which threaten to have serious consequences for equality and even for peace.

One of the key issues that came out of the QCEA/QPSW economic justice conference is the high levels of unemployment among young people (under 25 years old). Earlier editions of *Around Europe* make it clear that youth unemployment has long been a concern for both QCEA and the EU, as well as the EU's predecessor the European Economic Community (EEC). This is understandable given the negative impacts that youth unemployment creates and the long term problems that have often been linked to it. These negative impacts, both in the past and present, not only affect individuals but entail costs to the European economy and to society as a whole.

### Then

In some of *Around Europe's* earliest editions, QCEA reported on the EEC's efforts to reduce youth unemployment. In December 1978, *Around Europe* (Issue No.11, December 1978/January 1979) discussed the efforts of the then nine EU Member States' Social Affairs Ministers to fund job creation schemes to help the Community's two million unemployed young people. The ministers agreed to 'contribute employment premiums to under-25s in jobs which are likely to provide them with professional experience or increase their chances of obtaining stable employment.' By July 1983, unemployment levels had greatly increased, and the issue had clearly become more of a priority for both the EEC and QCEA. *Around Europe's* main article in July 1983 (Issue No. 57) reported on the widespread unemployment in Member States. The article highlighted that 40 per cent of those unemployed were under the age of 25 - 4.8 million individual European youths. The situation was recognised as serious, and the European Parliament held a special session focused solely on unemployment, which specified youth unemployment as a particular concern. According to *Around Europe*, the session made positive suggestions including reducing working times, more training for under 25s, and an increase in mobility opportunities between states within the EEC. Suggestions were also made that were deemed less useful, including demands for

increased production, increased competition, and increased demand. By November of 1984 the European Parliament had adopted the resolution that "unemployment should be the Community's first priority" (see *Around Europe* Issue No.70, November 1984).

### Now

Thirty years later and youth unemployment is widely recognised within the EU institutions, and by EU politicians, as a one of the most pressing modern concerns. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, has stated "The number of unemployed people in our Union, especially of young people...has become one of the most pressing issues in most, if not all, of our Member States." Martin Schultz, President of the European Parliament commented "The first priority is the fight against youth unemployment", while Manuel Barroso, President of the EU Commission, "pleaded in favour of stepping up the fight against youth unemployment which is a serious concern to him". In November 2013 the EU held a high-level summit in Paris focused solely on youth unemployment, which aimed to share best practice on preventing and tackling this issue. Delegates advocated increases in funding for higher education and vocational training as well as more funding opportunities for young people to become self-employed entrepreneurs.



European Youth Week at the EU Parliament in May/June 2013. Photo Credit European Parliament 2013. CC.

According to Eurostat, in October 2013, EU Member States had an overall unemployment rate of 11 per cent, but youth unemployment stood at 23.5 per cent. While this in itself is high, in specific countries this proportion is significantly higher. Countries like Spain and Greece have general unemployment rates of between 20 per cent and 25 per cent, but youth unemployment rates are in excess of 50 per cent.



Croatia has a regular unemployment rate of 17 per cent, yet youth unemployment stands at 43 per cent. Portugal has an unemployment rate of 15 per cent but an under 25s unemployment figure of 38 per cent. Even in countries which have relatively low overall unemployment, youth unemployment is significantly higher. One example is Sweden, which has a comparatively low overall unemployment rate of 7.9 per cent but a youth unemployment rate of 23 per cent. Britain's youth unemployment rate stands at 21 per cent, almost triple the general unemployment rate of nearly 8 per cent.

Youth unemployment is widely seen as corrosive to society in both individual Member States and in the EU as a community. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "in advanced economies, long term youth unemployment has a scarring effect on current generation of youth, causing distrust in the socio-economic and political systems." A spell of unemployment as a young person can often result in individuals receiving lower wages over a lifetime and often reduced living standards. In addition, the possibility of these individuals being victims of mental and physical disease increases significantly.



President of the EU Parliament, Martin Schulz, and French President François Hollande in Paris for a high level summit on youth unemployment- Photo credit European Parliament 2013, CC

At the societal level, large-scale youth unemployment places a strain on the finances of any state, as those who find themselves unemployed claim support at the same time as government revenues from taxable incomes are decreasing. This is particularly true at a time of economic crisis when unemployment can expand rapidly as occurred in Spain and Greece from 2008. High levels of youth unemployment may also lead to long-term problems of sluggish economic growth, as individuals do not develop skills and experience required by the economy, and natural creativity is starved by a lack of opportunities.

In both the short and the long term, youth unemployment could have serious consequences for European society and economy. It has the potential to cause individual anxiety and pain, increase inequality

and social discord and ultimately lead to social conflict. The EU and individual Member States must redouble their efforts to ensure that a sustainable solution is found for this far-reaching problem.

*Chris Diskin*

## QUAKER HOUSE NEWS

**October 5-6:** Nearly 200 people visited Quaker House as part of an Art Nouveau weekend held in Brussels. Staff and local Quakers explained Quakerism and the work of QCEA.

**October 18-19:** QCEA Council weekend with 20 Quakers representing different organizations all over Europe. Who is your Representative?

**November 8:** Alexandra joined other member organizations at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office General Assembly.

**November 15-17:** QCEA held a very successful conference on economic justice here in Brussels, an event planned with Quaker Peace and Social Witness of Britain Yearly Meeting.

**November 18:** QCEA staff participated in a consultation of Quaker peace and service organizations, held by Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC. The agenda included imagining a world without war, can we imagine such a world?

QCEA staff attended European Parliament events on the European Arrest Warrant, the EU's role with regard to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and a World Bank briefing.

**November 30 - December 1:** European and Middle East Young Friends held their annual meeting at Quaker House in Brussels.

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## Book Review

### ‘Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape’ by Raja Shehadeh

In the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the expansion of Israeli settlements and the building of a separation barrier have led to a ‘vanishing landscape’ for many Palestinians. There have been **international calls to halt settlement construction**, and the European Union has condemned Israeli settlements in the OPT as **illegal under international law**. With such a highly political discourse, it is all too easy to lose sight of the human side to the conflict. In his beautifully written and **award winning book**, Raja Shehadeh brings to the fore the human consequences of a disappearing landscape.

In 1978, Raja Shehadeh completed his law studies in London and returned to his native Ramallah in the West Bank of the OPT. As a lawyer, Shehadeh has spent four decades of his professional life in Ramallah fighting against land expropriation by Israel. Throughout this time, Shehadeh has been able to escape the realities of Israeli occupation by rambling through the countryside around Ramallah, where he witnessed considerable alterations to the landscape. *Palestinian walks* recounts six such sarhas (**an Arabic word meaning a walk**). Shehadeh describes a person going on a sarha as someone who ‘wanders aimlessly, not restricted by time and place, going where his spirit takes him to nourish his soul and rejuvenate himself’.

In describing these six walks, Shehadeh offers an insight into his thoughts, as he gently leads the reader on a journey through the changing landscape. On his first ramble, Shehadeh comes across a disused dwelling and recalls the story of an older relative who had danced with his young wife to celebrate their newly built dry-stone house some fifty years before. On other walks, Shehadeh chronicles conversations and experiences shared with different companions. In one instance, Shehadeh recounts the heart-stopping moment when his young nephew Aziz picked up part of

an unexploded missile. In another, Shehadeh describes his encounter with a young, armed Israeli settler. Despite expressing the uncompromising ideology of a settler, the young Israeli also grew up in the hills around Ramallah and clearly shares Shehadeh’s love of the landscape.



Photo credit Pal Fest, CC

Raja Shehadeh

*Palestinian walks* is not an unbiased account of events in the OPT, nor is it a guidebook for those wishing to explore this area of land. Indeed, many of the earlier walks described in the book are now not possible due to the expansion of settlements, the separation barrier, and checkpoints. Shehadeh expresses a deep knowledge of the land and its history. He provides a vivid picture of features which are no longer there or are no longer accessible to local Palestinians. As more settlements are established, familiar views become obscured by Israeli homes, farms, and other structures. The writing is rich and descriptive, introducing the reader to the ‘knotted and smooth knuckles’ of olive trees and rocks like ‘small islands perched on a sea of green’.

In this honest and heartfelt recollection of one man’s walks, the author shines the light of human experience onto this troubled region. Despite the many restrictions, Shehadeh is by no means the only one seeking to connect to the OPT through one of the most ancient forms of human movement. Groups such as **Abraham Path endeavour to understand the beauty, variety and depth of the region** by journeying thousands of kilometers across the diverse landscape. At walking pace, travelers have been able to appreciate the region for its outstanding natural beauty and culture, whilst acknowledging the difficulties for which it is increasingly known.

**Rebecca Viney-Wood**



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